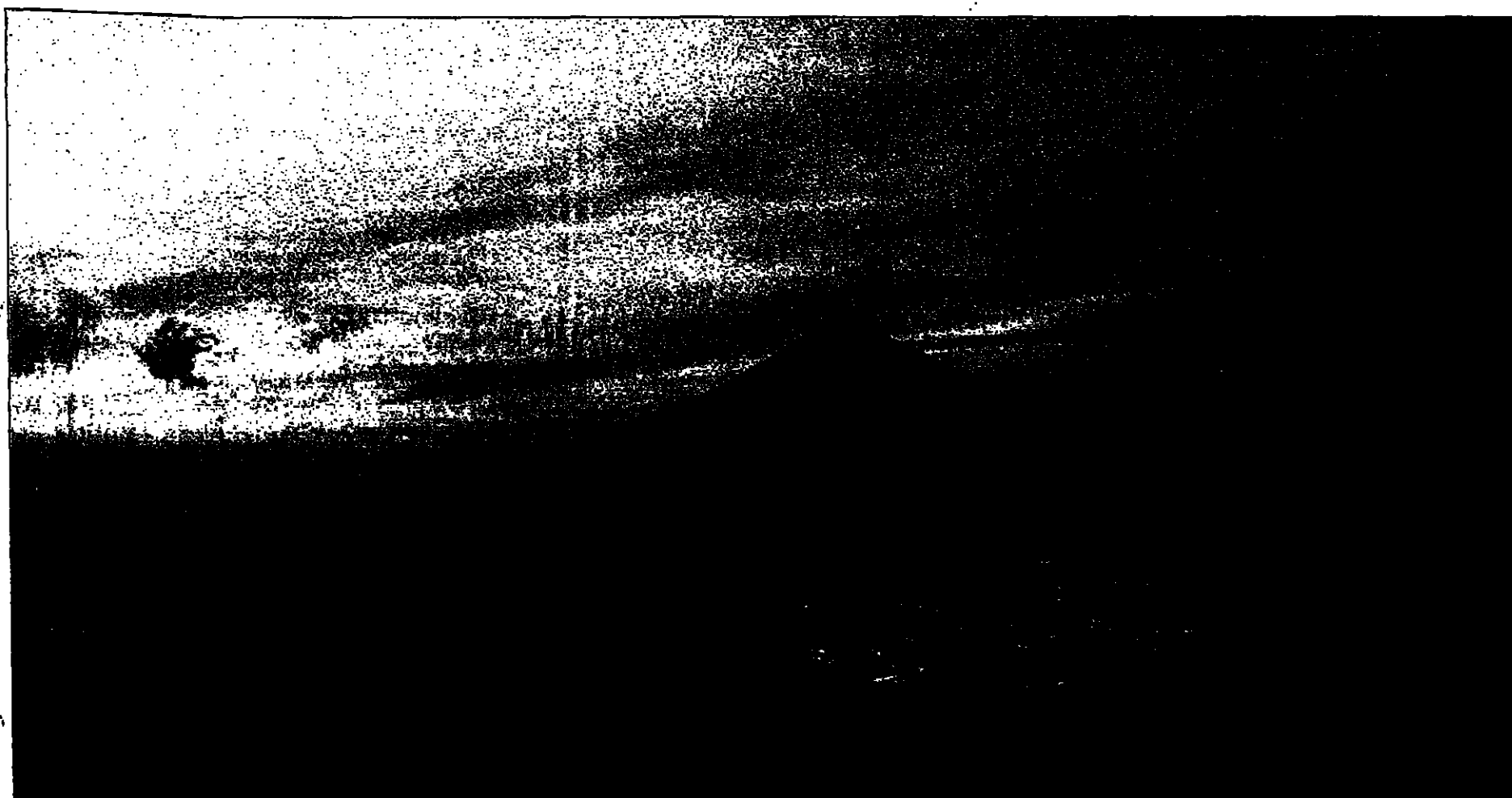


THE INDEPENDENT

Monday 8 December 1997 (R50p) 45p No 3,476

Three days to save the world: global warming summit on brink of failure



Pollution turns the sky red over Mount Fuji, which overlooks Kyoto, scene of the world summit on pollution

Photograph: David Swanborough

The first signs of a fudged agreement in Kyoto were emerging last night – a deal which will do next to nothing to stop potentially disastrous climate change. **Nicholas Schoon, Environment Correspondent, writes from Kyoto that with only three days to go, more than 150 countries are still deeply divided over a new UN global warming treaty.**

The European Union's tough world-leading stance on tackling global warming has begun to crumble. It became clear last night that the EU would not win its key demand that developed countries should cut their

greenhouse gas emissions by 15 per cent by 2010.

The final agreed target for cuts in these, the most important environmental talks ever, will be somewhere between 0 and 10 per cent, according to Britain's deputy prime minister John Prescott, who said last night that it was clear any agreement achieved by the end of the talks would be lacking crucial details. Despite having had two and a half years to draw up the treaty, and seven days of intense bargaining in Kyoto, the negotiators representing 150 countries have yet to reach agreement on about 10 issues and hundreds of lines of text.

The divisions between the EU and the rest of the wealthy nations over how much needs to be done remain deep. So does that between this US dominated rich club and the developing world. But now ministers have arrived in Japan's

former capital to start talking face to face, the pace has moved up several gears. This morning in Kyoto Mr Prescott will meet Vice-President Al Gore to ask America to give ground for the sake of the planet. "There's an overwhelming feeling that people do want to get an agreement – no one wants to be blamed for failure," said Mr Prescott.

If however the rich nations do agree to cut their annual emissions by only a few per cent compared to a 1990 baseline, that will be no great success in a world with an already warming atmosphere and oceans. It would signal to the Third World that those nations who produce most of the pollution do not take the problem too seriously. And, since global warming pollution from the poor countries is rising rapidly as they industrialise, it would not even stop world-wide emissions in-

creasing with each passing year. That, in turn, means the concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere will continue to rise more and more rapidly, threatening catastrophic climate change and sea level rise through the next century and beyond.

Britain argues that the time has come to drop the two most extreme positions in these negotiations – the European Union wanting a 15 per cent cut and Australia demanding an 18 per cent increase.

As for the complex six issues which have absorbed days of talking in Kyoto, "there's not enough time to come to an agreement," said Mr Prescott. These include greenhouse gas "sinks" which absorb some of the pollution, like forestry plantations, "joint implementation" which means rich countries offsetting some of their cuts at home by helping poor countries

reduce pollution, and the trading between wealthy nations in allowances to produce greenhouse gases. Much of the basics, let alone the detail, would have to be sorted out over the next two to three years.

A group of wealthy nations, led by the US, will have to soften their line on the Third World if there is to be any hope of an agreement by the time the conference ends, probably in the small hours of Thursday.

America has been demanding that the deal involves some developing countries, particularly India and China, making some kind of "meaningful" commitment about their own rising emissions. But that is outside the original mandate for the treaty.

Last night in Kyoto the EU's Environment Commissioner Ritt Bjerregaard said the EU rejected a new proposal of different targets for different

nations based largely on how much each was willing to offer in the run-up to Kyoto. The suggestion is that Europe would cut by 10 per cent, the US by 5, Japan by 2.5 and Australia increase by 5. She said none of the EU ministers now in Kyoto "wish to water down the EU proposal ... the feeling is that the US can do much more." Hopes are pinned on Vice-President Gore.

But the EU will come down from 15 per cent, and there are signs of flexibility in its demand that all developed countries must sign up for the same cut. Already it is willing to allow Australia and some other countries an easier target. Behind the scenes talks have begun on a formula or set of rules which would in effect allow nations different targets over the 20-year period from 1990 to 2010. **Kyoto summit, page 10 Letters, page 12**

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TODAY'S NEWS

£1m bill for refurbishing homes of two royal staff

Two royal employees spent more than £1m of taxpayers' money on refurbishing their homes, according to a report by a powerful committee of MPs. The revelation has helped to prompt the Public Accounts Committee to call for curbs on public subsidies for accommodation at the royal palaces. **Page 3**

Deadly flu warning

A potentially-deadly strain of flu which scientists believed affected only poultry has claimed its second human victim in Hong Kong. International researchers are scrambling to identify the characteristics of the virus amid increasing fears of a pandemic. **Page 3**

Babies hit by HIV

Britain is facing a new Aids epidemic – in children. A growing number of babies are being infected with the virus because their mothers have never had an HIV test. Pregnant women who are infected with the virus are being kept in the dark because there is no routine HIV testing in antenatal clinics. More than 250 HIV positive women gave birth in 1996 – the highest number ever recorded. **Page 5**

Billy Bremner dies

Billy Bremner, the former Leeds and Scotland soccer star, has died of a suspected heart attack at the age of 54, his family said yesterday. The midfielder made 585 appearances for Leeds between 1959 and 1976 before moving into management. **Page 16 and Sport**

Blair: Why we must help those excluded from society

The Prime Minister writes exclusively for *The Independent* on the Social Exclusion Unit which is launched today.



'Is it just another talking shop, more policy wonkery? Just another fizzing initiative that fizzles out before long? Yet another layer of bureaucracy?'
Polly Toynbee, page 13

New Labour was created so that we became the party of all the people: so that we could win power with the purpose of rebuilding Britain as one nation and giving everyone a stake in society. Yes, we are the party of Middle Britain, but if we don't raise the standard of living of the poorest people in Britain we will have failed as a government.

The Social Exclusion Unit, which I am launching today, will be at the heart of government, with the remit of co-ordinating our assault on poverty and social exclusion. Social Exclusion is about more than just financial deprivation. It is about the damage done by poor housing, ill-health, poor education, lack of decent transport, but above all the lack of work.

It is the better-off who often say the way to deal with poverty is to hand out more in benefits. Those on benefits do not ask for sympathy; nor do they want to be trapped on benefits which, even if increased, are never going to give them real security. They want opportunities and the chance to earn a decent living.

Our policy will be not just to shell out money when things go wrong but to invest now to prevent poverty and social exclusion happening. It will ensure that problems are solved across departments and in ways that make life easier for re-

cipients. For the key point about the unit is the recognition that all of these problems are linked. Poor education means a poor job. A poor job often leads to poor housing. Poor housing and poor jobs make it harder to bring up a family. So members of the unit will be drawn widely – from business, police and the voluntary sector with a range of experience of dealing with poverty, truancy, homelessness.

This unit will embody a core new Labour value: "community" or "one nation". It is a belief that we achieve more together than we can alone. That each person no matter what their background should have the chance to succeed.

Our contract with the people was about opportunity and responsibility going together. Already the new Labour government has put in place the most radical policies for a generation to tackle poverty and social exclusion.

That is a big claim but I believe it is justified. The biggest-ever programme to get the young and long-term unemployed back to work; £300m going into the first-ever national child-care strategy, VAT on heating cut and £50 to help all pensioners on income support with their winter fuel bills, housing benefit and section 11 funding cuts reversed, capital receipts released to build homes for the homeless, £400 into health and education with money targeted at the poorest areas; 6 million given the chance to save for the first time, and soon Britain's first-ever statutory minimum wage.

This is a programme that tackles head-on the causes of poverty and exclusion. So the idea that this government is the same as the last one, is nonsense.

But we must do more. I have asked them to focus on three big problems as a start. Poor housing estates, the problems of children expelled from schools or who are truant, and street homelessness. These I believe are the most pressing of the immediate problems. **Politics, page 8**

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2/BRIEFING

COLUMN ONE

Bobbies to get better boots for the beat

A policeman's lot is not a happy one, especially if he has the wrong kind of boots.

The results of a survey into accidents among the law enforcers suggest the flat-footed image of the bobby on the beat may not be that far off the mark. According to its findings, foot-related injuries could be costing the taxpayer up to £5.5m a year.

The injuries include slipping, tripping and falling over, and the huge cost comes from the time needed off work by the victims to receive from their accidents. In fact, the real figure could be even higher if the payment of ill-health pensions is taken into account.

Such a startling level of foot-related accidents comes in a survey carried out by the Association of Chief Police Officers last year, and reported in this week's *Policing Today* magazine. Bill Hughes, deputy chief constable of Hertfordshire and chairman of ACPO's uniform project group explains the disturbing findings.

"We conducted a study in West Yorkshire from June to August last year and we looked at all reports of foot-related injuries. We found that 48 officers had sustained injuries and sent them questionnaires, with 34 replying."

The findings caught senior officers on the hop. "We extrapolated from this that over a year the service could be losing £5.5m in lost opportunity costs," says Mr Hughes.

The results of all this could have far-reaching consequences, at least for police footwear. The uniform project group is now working on a specification for a new standard police boot, with the emphasis on being water-proof and providing proper protection for the vulnerable parts of a police officer's foot. In other words, the idea is to keep officers on their toes.

Once the specification is agreed for the new super boot, the Association of Police Purchasing Managers will draw up framework contracts for forces, so they can invite bids for boot-making from different manufacturers.

Mr Hughes explains: "It will be down to individual forces to complete risk assessments, and, if they believe that personal protective equipment is required, then there is the specification, which should provide the best protection for officers."

Under new health and safety laws next year local police forces will be for the first time be under a duty to supply safety equipment for their employees. And boots are not all that may change - the distinctive helmet could be altered too.

A separate survey, also carried in *Policing Today*, suggests that as many as one in five officers suffers a head injury every year. Plans are already in hand for a tough "concept helmet" with goggles and in-built radio. But Mr Hughes explains of the concept helmet: "They are a good bit of protective kit, but you are a little bit 'tired up' wearing them. We want something that is protective but does not make officers look ridiculous and makes them approachable."

— Michael Streeter

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PEOPLE



A cuddle at last for boy who lived in fear

A three-year-old boy who was forced to live in a sterile bubble because of a rare illness has been cured by doctors in a revolutionary bone marrow transplant operation.

Jack Wheatley's condition meant that he could not even be cuddled by his parents because his body's immune system could not combat the most basic of germs.

The three-year-old was diagnosed as suffering Hyper IGM, an inherited immuno-deficiency condition, when he was six months old. Since then, he has had to live in a sterile tent into which was pumped sterile air.

Around his bed at Newcastle General Hospital was a red line beyond which his parents, Jeanette and Stuart, and any other visitors

could not pass. If they wanted to hold or cuddle their son, they had to be scrubbed down first by medical staff.

Jack underwent a bone marrow transplant to try to combat the illness and doctors say it is the first time in Europe that an unrelated donor has been used successfully.

Mrs Wheatley said she was now hoping to have her son home by Christmas. "Two weeks ago I hugged and kissed him for the first time in six months and it was wonderful," she said.

"We are looking forward to getting home for Christmas. It's going to be brilliant because we have been given the best present ever."

Jack's older brother, Ryan, 11,

also suffers from the condition but Jack had shown no signs of it until he was six months old. Doctors are now hoping they can perform a similar operation on Ryan.

"After the problems with Ryan suffering from Hyper IGM we just thought 'oh no here we go again'," said Mrs Wheatley. "Normal life just came to an end. I stayed here in Newcastle with Jack while Stuart travelled between here and Lincolnshire. I just want to get him home now and try and get back to normal."

The disease, which only affects boys, is rare with only about 30 to 40 cases in the UK. It leaves the body's immune system unable to kill germs properly and the body susceptible to infections.

— Steve Boggan

The man who served 25 years for someone else

A man freed on appeal after serving 25 years of a life sentence for murder said yesterday: "There is so much of my life I have lost." Andrew Evans was speaking on his first weekend of freedom after the Court of Appeal ruled that his conviction was unsafe.

He falsely admitted murdering a schoolgirl, Judith Roberts, when he was 17. Mr Evans "confessed" after suffering a mental breakdown, being dismissed from the Army and dreaming he had seen the face of the 14-year-old victim.

He said yesterday: "What keeps going through my mind is the fact that there is a murderer still out there. But now they can go after him and I hope they will, because

it is not right. We have suffered as a family but the family of Judith Roberts have suffered too all these years. I feel ashamed in a sense, because I have got my life back but they have not had justice yet." Speaking on Central Television's *Tuesday Special - The Nightmare*, Mr Evans added: "I know a lot of people my age will talk about their kids leaving school, their mortgages and their jobs. They are talking about things which have been occupying them for the best part of their lives and all I have got to talk about is 25 years floating around in a dustbin. There is so much... I have lost."

But he insists he will not become bitter: "I can't, because

there was no conspiracy, no falsifying of documents. I don't think for one moment somebody sat down and said 'we are going to convict this man'. But I was 17, immature, inadequate, virtually illiterate and that's why what happened to me is so horrible. They took advantage of my lack of maturity." Mr Evans, who says he does not even know how to board a bus or write a cheque, is trying to rebuild his life.

That means spending time with his parents, Bill and Joan, and his sister Sandra who used to take caravan holidays near his prison to visit him. Mrs Evans said: "Seeing him again, it is like the birth of a new child."

UPDATE

BUSINESS

British companies 'inspiring'

A multi-media company, a phone retailer, a double-glazing maker, a fish freezer and a toy distributor were among those that topped a survey of Britain's fastest growing companies.

Topping the Virgin Atlantic Fast Track 100 league table was multi-media company Eyretel, which produces digital voice recording equipment used by call centres, emergency services and financial trading rooms.

The survey was conducted by entrepreneur and academic Hamish Stevenson. Dr Stevenson is the Virgin Atlantic Research Fellow in Entrepreneurship at Templeton College, Oxford University.

For his study, he ranked companies by their compound annual sales growth between 1993 and 1996. Horsham-based Eyretel, set up in 1990 by Roger Keenan, saw its turnover grow by a staggering 215 per cent year on year over the past three years. Among the other companies included in the top 10 of the Fast Track 100 were mobile phone retailer DX Communications of Glasgow, fish freezer Simpson DR (Chilled Foods) of Hull, computer assembler Roldec Systems of Wolverhampton, and toy distributor Vivid Imaginations of Haslemere.

Richard Branson, the Virgin chief, said: "The report is inspiring. Reading through it for the first time, I was amazed by the sheer range of companies. I find it enormously encouraging that British entrepreneurs are exploring every avenue in providing quality products and services to their customers." Companies were judged on their annual compound growth rate, with minimum sales of £250,000 in 1993 and minimum sales of £3m in 1996.

Between them, they increased their combined sales nearly seven-fold between 1993 and 1996, with an average growth rate of 100 per cent. Their combined turnover in 1997 is forecast to exceed £2.7bn and the firms have seen a fivefold increase in their combined workforce over the past three years to 12,500 new jobs. Mr Branson added: "All of the Virgin Atlantic Fast Track 100 companies have achieved mouth-watering turnover growth." The research was co-sponsored by Coopers & Lybrand and Mercury Asset Management.

WORKPLACE

Bosses get into Christmas spirit

Company bosses will be playing Santa this Christmas, paying towards the office party or picking up the whole tab, according to a new survey today.

More than half of 260 organisations polled by the Institute of Management (IoM) said they planned to contribute to the festivities, with one in three paying for everything. Almost one in five firms will be paying their staff a Christmas bonus, while two out of five managers will give gifts to their workers. Just over half of the companies surveyed plan to close between Christmas and the New Year.

Roger Young, director general of the IoM, said: "Christmas is a great opportunity for all hard-working teams to celebrate success and have some seasonal fun. Managers can use the occasion to reward the efforts of the past year and fire their people with enthusiasm for the year ahead."

FOOD

Curry given a warm reception

Indian food is more popular than ever in the UK and curry is now the most popular ready-made meal bought from the ethnic food section in supermarkets, a study reveals today.

The popularity of Indian cuisine in restaurants and takeaways has filtered through to the retail sector, says market analysis company Datamonitor. Sales of Indian chilled, frozen and ready-made meals have overtaken Chinese and Italian foods, it adds. Since 1992, sales of curry-based canned ready meals have shot up by more than 15 per cent, compared to an increase of less than 1 per cent for noodle-based products.

And sales of Indian chilled ready meals are worth a staggering £37m compared to £26.3m for Chinese meals. In the lucrative frozen ready meals segment, Indian recipes have overtaken Oriental as the most popular, with sales worth £72m.

Cooking Indian meals at home has become a popular culinary pastime and sales of Indian-style wet sauces have climbed by more than 24 per cent a year and now account for 16 per cent of wet cooking sauces, up from nearly 11 per cent in 1992.

In the dry cooking sauce market, Indian has overtaken Oriental and now lies in second place behind Mexican food. Datamonitor's UK Ethnic Food report said: "Manufacturers have begun to realise the range of Indian recipes which can be exploited. This has seen the introduction of whole new ranges, particularly Bali foods, which have given great impetus to sales of Indian food."

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.40	Italy (lira)	2,856
Austria (schillings)	20.39	Japan (yen)	214.18
Belgium (francs)	59.97	Malta (lira)	0.63
Canada (\$)	2.32	Netherlands (guilders)	3.26
Cyprus (pounds)	0.84	Norway (kroner)	11.82
Denmark (kroner)	11.11	Portugal (escudos)	204.51
France (francs)	9.71	Spain (pesetas)	244.96
Germany (marks)	2.91	Sweden (kroner)	12.78
Greece (drachme)	463.61	Switzerland (francs)	2.35
Hong Kong (\$)	12.63	Turkey (lira)	320,866
Ireland (punts)	1.10	US (\$)	1.64

Sources: Thomas Cook
Rates for indication purposes only

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McCartney tells of Linda's cancer battle

Sir Paul McCartney, whose wife, Linda, is recovering from a two-year battle with cancer, told how the 12-steps of Alcoholics Anonymous helped them cope. In an interview with Sir David Frost, Sir Paul described how the diagnosis of a life-threatening disease "focuses you on the things you think are important in life" and "stops you messing around." That was "about the only good thing you can say about it."

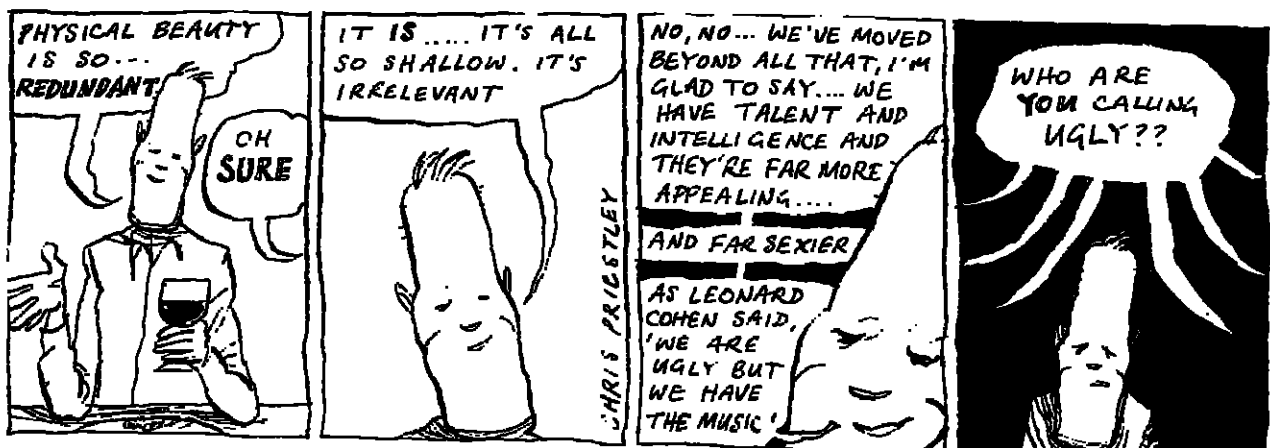
Asked whether the experience had changed his feeling towards "It" or God, Sir Paul said: "I think so, although I don't like 'change your feelings'. It makes you talk to 'It' or God a little more often, which is a good thing." He and Linda found strength from the 12-steps programme issued to Alcoholics Anonymous members, sent to them by a friend. A step saying people should "hand over" their fears and anxieties when they cannot cope, had been particularly useful.

"I think unless you are very religious, you live your life thinking there is no one to hand it over to. I think it was a blessing for us to find, again through this 12-step programme a friend sent us." He and the other Beatles had made a pact that whoever died first would send back a message if there was an afterlife. So far there had been no word. "Stuart Sutcliffe was the first to die and I didn't have a message. When John (Lennon) died, he knew the deal, but I never had a message from him."

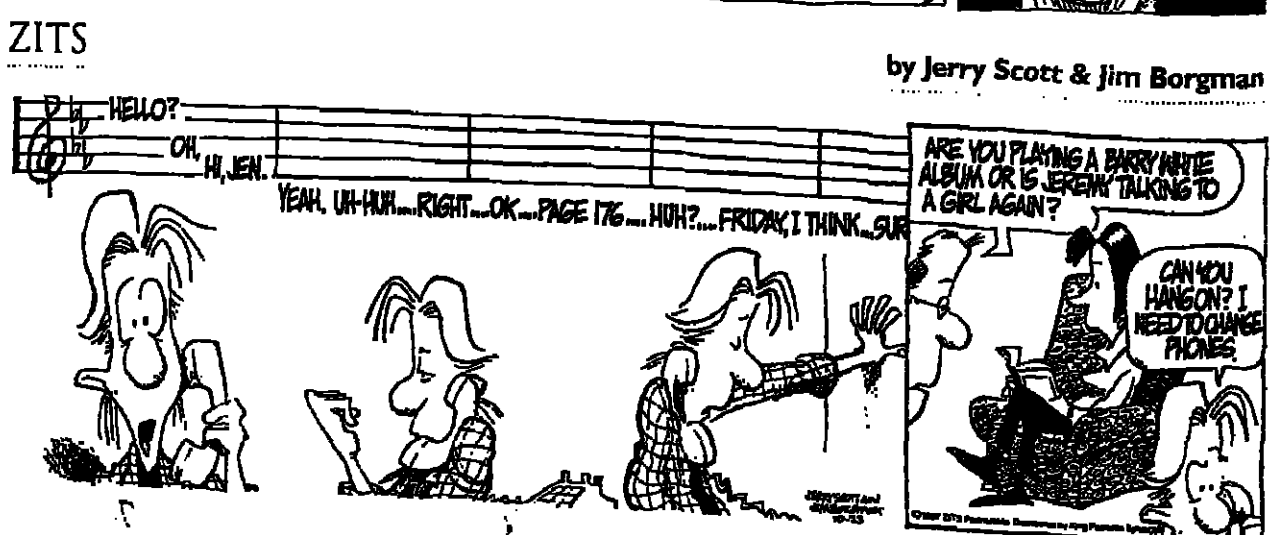
— Clare Garner



7.30 FOR 8



by Chris Priestley



by Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

IN TOMORROW'S INDEPENDENT

Couples counselling on TV: make or break?
FEATURES



Bond: What's he got that you haven't?
THE EYE



TB: could the disease that killed Orwell return to haunt the middle classes?
HEALTH

Happy hookers declare war on feminist writers

Prostitutes are furious with feminist academics who they accuse of making money from portraying them as victims. Working women tell Ian Burrell that they are happy in their jobs, while feminists argue that the idea of a "happy hooker" is a myth.

Cherie, by her own admission, makes "a lot of money" from her work. She has not, she says, been coerced into having sex with strangers and is a prostitute by choice. "I cannot say the men that I have contact with are the type of people I would like to go out to dinner with. But they are inoffensive, generous people who are willing to pay for a service which I am happy to provide when they are paying me," she said.

Some feminist writers would not believe her. A bitter row has broken out between women academics who believe prostitution is a form of abuse and working prostitutes who object to being portrayed as victims.

Things came to a head this weekend as some prostitutes and outreach groups pledged to have nothing further to do with academics who specialise in writing about them. Much of the rancour stems from a recent conference called "Prostitution: Violence Against Women and Children". Organised by the Leeds Metropolitan University, it was described as the first conference which "will not be a debating platform for those who believe that prostitution is a 'job like any other'". Some prostitutes, who attended as delegates, left in disgust.

Cherie (her working name), who works from a house in Leicester, was livid at the conference message. "It is very annoying to have academics tell me I am being abused by doing something that they are making an awful lot of money writing about," she said.

Another prostitute left in tears after an argument with a delegate who accused her husband of being her pimp.

Also among those who left early was Sue Johnson, a prostitute for 19 years who now works as director of the Pro-



Game girl? 'It is annoying to have academics tell me I am being abused by doing something they are making an awful lot of money writing about,' said on prostitute

stitute Outreach Workers group in Nottingham. "I take great offence if anyone says I am so thick or so much of a victim that I cannot think for myself," she said.

While accepting some women were forced into prostitution, she added: "The academics are radical feminists who cannot see the real issues around prostitution. They were portraying all the women as victims and all the men as pervers. They will never stop the demand for prostitution - how are they going to rehabilitate punters?"

The conference was used to launch plans for Britain's first "Johns School", designed to re-educate kerb-crawlers. The idea, pioneered in America, involves first offenders being instructed by the courts to attend a school where former prostitutes would tell them of the damage their activities

are causing both to the women and the community. West Yorkshire police was represented at the first working group meeting this week.

The conference chair, Jalna Hanmer, a professor in women's studies at Leeds Metropolitan University, said there was no intention to offend prostitutes. "No one who is doing work in this area really wants to blame women or say they are... passive. Quite the contrary, we want to work with women to make their lives better and help women who are in [prostitution] get out if they want it," she said.

But she argued that research showed many prostitutes who had believed they were happy in their work later changed their minds. "It's a way of trying to handle a really difficult situation. You present an 'I'm alright' face to the world," she said. "Finally

you have to drop that and acknowledge 'I'm not alright really' and you need to leave prostitution."

Among the conference speakers was author Sheila Jeffreys, who launched her book *The Idea of Prostitution*, in which she challenges the idea "that men are entitled to abuse women and profit from their exploitation". She said the feminist argument against prostitution was being undermined by the growing clamour for "sexual liberalism, economic individualism and free choice ideas".

The conference was opened by Emma Humphreys, who as a 17-year-old prostitute killed a man in defence against rape and served seven years in prison. She worked as a prostitute from the age of 11 and is now planning a book to dispel the myths about child prostitution.

Royal employees spent £1m decorating own apartments

Two senior royal employees have spent more than £1m on refurbishing their Kensington Palace apartments, according to evidence given to MPs. Fran Abrams, Political Correspondent, says the Public Accounts Committee will call for a curb on public subsidies of accommodation inside the Royal Palaces.



Michael Peat: Palace employee given £115,000 for furniture

A row over the Royal Family's reluctance to disclose its affairs has caused a five-year delay in publication of the final report on property services, salaries and accommodation in its palaces. Hearings were held two years ago but letters and questions have been going back and forth ever since.

Finally the PAC is ready to produce its report but, under a Conservative chairman, it will stop short of demanding that the Royals should hand back one or more of their five publicly owned and funded palaces. However, Labour members who have campaigned for greater openness and accountability will call for further action.

Evidence submitted to the committee has revealed that two senior royal employees have spent more than £1.1m doing up their own personal apartments.

Michael Peat, the Royal Household's director of finance, and John Tiltman, its director of property services, have both moved into the accommodation in Kensington Palace. Mr Peat pays £338 per week in rent, while Mr Tiltman's job comes with a salary reduced by £230 per week in lieu of rent. Neither has to pay council tax or other bills.

Before moving into the palace, Mr Peat lived in Wandsworth and Mr Tiltman in Croydon. Mr Peat was given £115,000 from the public purse for furniture.

The report will say the accommodation

given to relatives, employees and pensioners of the Royal household is so valuable that if market rents were charged most could never afford to live there. It is also expected to raise the question of how the accommodation can pay the tax which should be chargeable on the dwellings, which are regarded by the government as taxable benefits.

The Royal Family has promised to cut down the number of grace and favour homes, employees' residences and pensioners' apartments which are maintained by the public.

But since 1994 the number has remained steady at 285. The Royal Household has promised to reduce that to 205 as they become vacant, but there has been no change.

The Royals object to the use of the term "grace and favour," saying almost all the accommodation is for royals, employees and pensioners. In evidence to the committee officials said in the next generation the only family members with the right to accommodation would be the Queen's four

children and Princes Harry and William. Many of those who live in the palaces have only nominal duties. For example, 15 military knights of Windsor Castle are given homes because they are required to attend weekly services in ceremonial dress.

When evidence was given to the committee two years ago, eight apartments were occupied by royals, 226 by current employees, 27 by former employees and four through "grace and favour" arrangements.

The Royal Family receives £7.9m a year from the Civil List, which pays the salaries of major royals and 296 staff, plus £20.6m in grant-in-aid which is used for the upkeep of the royal palaces. In return, revenues of around £80m are returned to the state.

The rents and salary abatements on the apartments come to £400,000 per year - half the annual cost of maintenance.

One Labour member of the committee, Alan Williams, has been a long-term campaigner against excessive funding of the royals. He has also asked how the accommodation is properly taxed if it has never been valued. The last Chancellor, Kenneth Clarke, said the flats and houses were taxable benefits like any other.

Mr Williams said the Royal family should be made to give back Kensington Palace, St James' Palace and Clarence House - once the Queen Mother had died - to the state. They could live quite comfortably in Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle, he said.

A Buckingham Palace spokeswoman said there had never been any question of Mr Peat or Mr Tiltman benefitting personally from the refurbishment of their flats. The money would be recouped in rent over a 30-year period, she said, and much of it was required for fire safety reasons.

"No grace and favour accommodation has been granted since 1991, and as they die it will become vacant. We made it clear that there are no plans to move members of the family who are currently there out."

Scramble to develop vaccine for new strain of killer flu

Bird flu, the name given to a new, potentially fatal, strain of influenza, has claimed another victim in Hong Kong where it first came to light.

International researchers are scrambling to identify the characteristics of the virus, writes Stephen Vines in Hong Kong, amidst increasing fears of a pandemic.

Hong Kong health officials and experts from the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, based in Atlanta, USA, went into an emergency session yesterday after it was announced that a 54-year-old man had died from the disease and a 13-year-old girl was fighting for her life in hospital.

Bird flu, more properly known as H5N1,

a strain of the influenza A virus, has killed one other person and infected a fourth.

Before researchers in Holland and the US discovered the first victim had died from the H5N1 virus, it had been thought that it was only found in poultry and could not be transmitted to humans. Lack of information about the new flu strain, and its ability to spread, has caused international authorities to urgently monitor the situation in Hong Kong. The World Health Organisation (WHO) was brought in when a three-year-old boy died last May after contracting the disease from chickens. Some 4,500 chickens died as a result of H5N1 influenza infection last April.

In humans, bird flu develops into Reye Syndrome which affects the nervous system and liver with fatal consequences.

Paul Saw, the deputy director of Hong Kong's health department, who chaired yesterday's emergency meeting, said the four victims had no connection and, at this

stage, human-to-human transmission is not proven but he added: "We feel this possibility would need to be further looked into."

He said the WHO has been asked to "alert vaccine production centres in the world... with a view to preparing the necessary vaccines". But he insisted there was no cause for panic as available evidence did not suggest the disease was widespread.

Daniel Lavany, the WHO's headquarters chief in Geneva, said it would take at least six months to develop a vaccine against bird flu and feared that the spread of the disease would accelerate. "If we have four cases, yes, the virus is trying to seed itself in the population," he said.

Although the first victim died in May, it was not until August that doctors were able to confirm that the boy had died of bird flu. Hong Kong hospitals and clinics have now stepped up influenza surveillance activities to try and identify the existence of other cases.

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THE INDEPENDENT
MONDAY 8 DECEMBER 1997
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Aids: why shouldn't mothers be told the truth?

Britain is facing a new Aids epidemic - in children. A growing number of babies are being infected because their mothers have never had an HIV test. Jeremy Lawrence, Health Editor, looks at the threat - and how it could be stopped.

"Don't die of ignorance" was the slogan once used to alert the nation to the dangers of Aids. Now, the worst infectious condition of modern times is being passed to the next generation - because of ignorance.

Pregnant women who are infected with the virus are being kept in the dark because there is no routine HIV testing in antenatal clinics. More than 250 HIV-positive women gave birth in 1996, the highest number yet recorded. In total, more than 450 babies are known to have been infected, with the oldest survivors now in their mid-teens.

Up to one in three babies born to HIV-infected women become infected themselves, though it may be years before they find out. With a combination of drug treatment and other precautions - avoiding breast-feeding and opting for a Caesarean delivery - mothers can cut their risk of having an infected baby by two-thirds.

Consultants in HIV medicine say too little is being done to protect unborn babies from the disease. A working party of the Royal Colleges of Obstetricians, Paediatricians and Midwives is preparing guidelines on antenatal HIV testing but some doctors fear this will not go far enough. A series of papers on the issue is to appear in the *British Medical Journal* in the New Year.

Dr Annemiek de Ruiter, consultant genito-urinary physician in charge of women with HIV at St Thomas's Hospital, London, said pregnant women were routinely tested for syphilis but not for HIV, even though syphilis is far less common. Only when their babies

were born and then fell ill of Aids-related illnesses did they discover they were infected.

"I get women screaming at me that all this blood was taken while they were pregnant; surely it must have been tested for HIV. But it wasn't. There is a public misconception that if blood is taken it is tested for everything."

Midwives are supposed to offer all pregnant women an HIV test but they often fail to explain why it is important. Dr de Ruiter said: "It is very much left up to the midwife. We believe it should not just be offered, it should be recommended. It is a shocking thing to learn that you are HIV positive and the women will need counselling but there are now very good treatments we can offer to reduce the risk to the baby. That is a clear benefit." Anonymous testing for HIV has been carried out in antenatal clinics for years to assess the extent of spread of the disease. Last year 34 HIV-positive women gave birth at St Thomas's but only 14 knew they were carrying the virus. In some hospitals, the proportion of infected mothers who know they carry the virus is only 2 to 3 per cent.

Dr Diana Gibb, a consultant paediatrician at the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, said fewer than 10 per cent of infected women in London were detected during pregnancy. A study of the cost of testing is expected to show that it is less than the cost of treating the affected children throughout their lives.

"About one in six babies of infected mothers will carry the virus at birth. That rate is doubled if the mothers breast-feed. We now have substantial opportunities to reduce the transmission rate. Something has got to be done."

By giving the mother the Aids drug AZT during pregnancy and avoiding breast-feeding after birth the transmission rate can be cut from 30 per cent to 5-10 per cent. In France and in the main cities in the United States, most women are tested for HIV and transmission rates are much lower than in the UK.



Gill Hickman and her son Malachai: Although she was HIV positive when she was trying for a baby, he was born HIV negative. Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

'I'm very optimistic - I felt my child would be all right'

Gill Hickman was luckier than some. She knew she was carrying the Aids virus when four years ago she decided to try for a baby.

"When I discovered I was HIV positive in 1989 I thought it was a death sentence. Later I realised it wasn't, and that if I had a baby, it wouldn't definitely get ill. I was 38 and I very much wanted a child."

When Malachai was born

she avoided breast feeding to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus to him. But she turned down the offer of AZT while she was pregnant. "I am anti-drugs. I wondered what the side effects would be. I am an incredibly optimistic person and I felt really confident that Malachai would be all right."

He was. He is clear of the virus and mother and child are both well. Ms Hickman

believes pregnant women should be offered an HIV test but they should not be pressed into it.

"It has got to be explained sensitively and thoughtfully because the implications are so serious. Women have to think about the implications for themselves as well as their children."

Some children born with the virus remain healthy for years while others develop se-

rious Aids-related illnesses within months. With the development of new drugs they are surviving longer - to 15 and 16 - but a question mark remains over how long they will ultimately live.

Fear of prejudice means most affected families seek anonymity. Paula Harrowing, of Body and Soul, the Aids charity for families, said children had been bullied and abused at school, and neigh-

bours had turned nasty, after information about their HIV status had leaked.

"One man with an infected child told the neighbours because he wanted support. He came back from work and found the family cat nailed to the door with a note saying 'don't come back'. Very few of those affected will take the risk of revealing they carry the virus."

— Jeremy Lawrence

Kidnap Karli secure

Karli Hawthorne woke yesterday morning next to her mother Tanya, who is not letting her two-day-old daughter out of her sight. She slept in a cot by the hospital bed of her 30-year-old mother after being returned to her family following a 12-hour drama when she was snatched from the maternity unit. Karli and her mother were said to be fine in Basildon Hospital, Essex, yesterday. They will probably be allowed home on Wednesday.

Security at the hospital was tight, with two police officers on guard in Willow Ward, in the maternity unit, where Karli and her mother were recovering. A third officer was posted at the entrance to the maternity unit.

The hospital spokeswoman said: "I have spoken to the mother on the ward today and Karli and her mother are both fine. The baby is at her mother's bedside. All of the babies here are at their mothers' bedside and are never let out of their mothers' sight."

Mrs Hawthorne, who had Karli by Caesarean section on Friday, was not expected to be detained at the hospital any longer than the normal period of four to five days. "There is certainly no medical reason that I am aware of which could change that," a spokeswoman said.

"It will be Tuesday or Wednesday before she is discharged, but it will more than likely be Wednesday." An Essex Police spokeswoman said: "Once Tanya is discharged the three officers will not be at the hospital any more."

A woman is to appear in court in Basildon today in connection with the abduction of Karli.

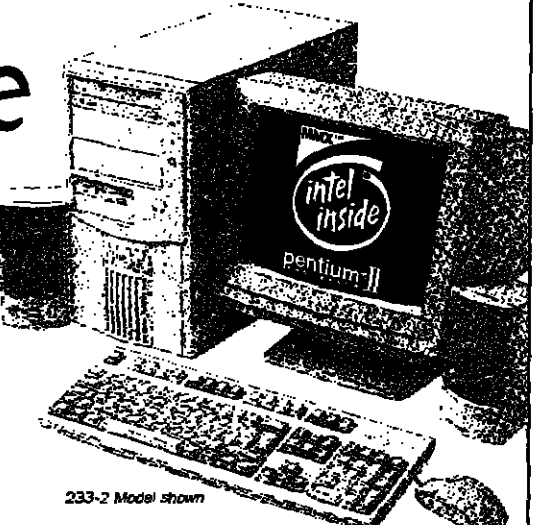
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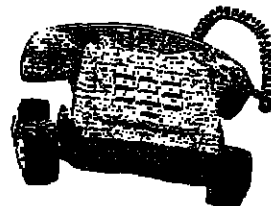
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Russians see plane disaster as fresh evidence of nation's decay

Less than a week after scores of Siberian miners died in an explosion, Russia was in mourning again yesterday as rescuers, working in Arctic temperatures, retrieved the remains of 48 people who died when a cargo plane smashed into a block of flats.

The accident, scalded into the memory of millions by pictures of the plane's vast white tail jutting out of the building's ruins, will deepen the despair of many Russians who see such disasters as evidence of the national decay that has set in since the end of the Soviet Union.

The Russian government yesterday suspended all flights by Antonov-124s, a military cargo plane, until it has established why one of them fell out of the sky 20 seconds after taking off from Irkutsk in southern Siberia on Saturday. News

agency reports yesterday said that after take-off the pilots complained that two of their four engines had failed.

Other speculation centred on poor quality fuel, and the possibility that its cargo - two Sukhoi-27 fighter jets, destined for Hanoi - was incorrectly loaded. The truth may lie within the aircraft's flight recorders, which have been found and dispatched to Moscow for analysis.

Miraculously, the 340-tonne plane narrowly missed an orphanage of 150 children, although the building caught fire, claiming the lives of two of them. Yesterday, watched by groups of the bereaved, 1,600 rescue workers rummaged through the wreckage in temperatures that fell to as low as minus 30C. Sergei Shoigu, the Russian emergencies minister,

told reporters that some people were still missing, and the death toll could rise to 62.

Last night, the Russian television news was dominated by accounts of the accident, accompanied by harrowing pictures of the injured. Russia can sometimes seem hardened to bloodshed and tragedy. But this disaster, coupled with 67 deaths in last Tuesday's blast in a coal mine in Novokuznetsk, has been a heavy blow. It is one that Boris Yeltsin, struggling to limit the effects of a political scandal and global financial turmoil, could do without. So, too, could the city of Irkutsk, for whom it was the return of a nightmare: in 1994, it was the scene of Russia's deadliest post-Soviet crash, when a Tu-154 crashed, killing 124 people.

— Phil Reeves, Moscow



The wreckage of the Antonov cargo plane which crashed into a block of flats in Irkutsk

Photograph: Sergei Karpelkin/Reuters

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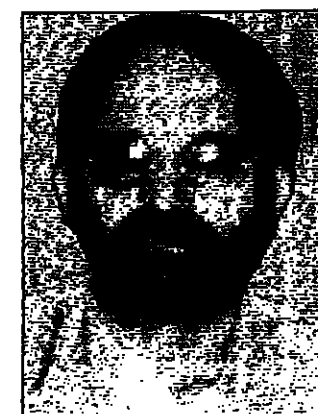
Iran's leader urged to stand up for human rights

Iran's most outspoken intellectual yesterday warned that clerical opponents of the country's newly-elected President Mohamed Khatami are determined to overthrow him. In an interview with Robert Fisk in Tehran, Professor Abdol-Karim Soroush criticised the Iranian leader for indecision and urged him to stand up for human rights and academic freedom.

While the world fondly believes that the liberal and academically distinguished President Khatami - an old personal friend of Dr Soroush - is building a new Iran, the professor displays no such optimism. He observed the vitriolic attacks on Ayatollah Hossein Montazeri - Khatami's electoral supporter who last month dared to accuse Supreme Leader Khamenei of setting up a parallel unelected government - with grave concern.

"Khatami's enemies are very determined to topple him before his term finishes. Some people believe the attacks on Montazeri are directed at the president - in order to prove there can be no security under Khatami's rule. I have nothing explicitly against the velayat-e-faqih, but the [religious] men who are in charge should not be above criticism. There is nothing in Islam that prevents us from criticising the highest in the country, whether they be religious or secular," he said.

So will President Khatami



Dr Soroush: Banned from teaching at his university

Dr Soroush arrived late for our meeting. Only last month, he was prevented from lecturing in Tehran by crowds from the Ansar-e-Hezbollah - the Partisans of the Party of God - who screamed abuse at him before attacking his car. "I managed to escape and later gave my speech over the telephone," he said with just a hint of a nervous smile. "My voice was re-broadcast through loudspeakers. It was quite an innovation. They might even prevent me doing that next time. It was only a 15-minute speech. All this showed me that the authorities are not prepared to open our society."

Dr Soroush looks an unlikely martyr. A small, bearded man with tinted spectacles and little hair. A graduate of London University, where he studied the philosophy of science; he talks like a machine gun and rarely stops to reload, in a voice that combines passion and frustration in equal measure. He is certain that President Khatami's enemies - the conservative clerics defeated in last May's election who have gathered around Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic - are hoping for an outbreak of violence to crush the newly-elected president.

The professor's sin was to question the velayat-e-faqih - the "leadership of wise men" that gives Ayatollah Khamenei such enormous though unelected power in Iran - and to have demanded a society based upon rights rather than duties. No wonder he is now banned from teaching at his university. No wonder newspapers are no longer permitted to publish his words. "Sometimes they have the courage to print my name," he said. His passport was briefly confiscated and he still does not know if he will be allowed to

make a stand against Khamenei and defend his old theological colleague? "Khatami does not want to enter into a conflict with the religious authorities," Dr Soroush replied. "He has avoided debate in order to stabilise his position - which he wants people to see as impartial. The authorities expected him to take action and attack them... but violence is not in Khatami's interest. Once people are in the street, no one can guarantee there will be no violence."

But the president's pacificity draws Dr Soroush's irritation, if not scorn. "Mr Khatami has to take matters into his own hands... he has got to allow intellectuals and university men to discuss their ideas about civil society and religion openly - otherwise civil society is pointless," he said.

The professor's point is simple: only an elected government can secure human rights and freedom of expression for Iranians. To do this, it is necessary to solve the contradiction created by the late Ayatollah Khomeini - an Islamic republic which contains both democracy and religious dictatorship. And only Khatami can provide that solution.

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7/CRIME

Mardi Gra
bomber back
on the prowl

On Saturday the Mardi Gra bomber struck again, leaving a parcel outside a Sainsbury's branch. After 11 months' dormancy there has now been a pattern of similar attacks in recent weeks. Kate Watson-Smyth tries to uncover the man behind the campaign.

Packages left near Sainsbury's branches in and around London signalled the return of the bomber. On Saturday a shopper escaped unhurt after taking home a device in a plastic carrier bag after visiting the West Ealing branch of Sainsbury's.

Police believe the bomb was left at a bus-stop in a Sainsbury's bag, where the 73-year-old woman inadvertently picked it up with her own shopping. It was made of what police called an "improvised shotgun", with the words Mardi Gra on it.

No one knows whether he is a man with a grudge or someone who enjoys pitting his wits against the police, and the resulting notoriety. Since 1994, when the first package was left outside a branch of Barclays Bank, there have been periods of activity followed by periods of hibernation.

On 15 November this year he planted a cassette, containing a shotgun cartridge wired to a springloaded trigger, in a bag of groceries at a Ruislip branch of Sainsbury's. A label offered £5 to the finder if it was returned to a Sainsbury's store. Two other devices exploded that day, one in Ealing, the other in

Greenford. On 25 November an exploded device was found near a branch of the supermarket in Chislehurst, Kent and another was taken into the customer-services department of the the Lea Green store and was made safe.

The Mardi Gra bomber moved into public consciousness in December 1994. Six bombs wrapped in Christmas paper and bearing the legend "Welcome to the Mardi Gra Experience" were sent to Barclays Bank branches, injuring a secretary and a clerk. There followed a demand for limitless sums of cash that could be drawn using specially created cashpoint cards.

No money was paid and all went quiet. The following May he posted devices; others were delivered by hand. In April 1996 he wrote to the *Daily Mail*, using the name Mardine Graham, describing Mardi Gra as "Barclays Bank victims who are in the process of reversing the tide of fortune into their favour after a year of activity".

Psychological profiles suggested a man working alone, obsessed, resourceful, intelligent. Police did not rule out a military background.

In July 1996 a letter to Sainsbury's head office demanded a "considerable amount of money" and said bombs would be sent to executives or left in stores if it were not paid. A letter sent to a paper on 18 December said he was going to target Sainsbury's shoppers. No one knows why the bomber has started again, nor how long it will last this time. One thing seems certain: it can only be a matter of time before someone is seriously injured.



Feeling secure: The Crossley girls (from left) Emma, Holly and Charlene outside their home Photograph: Justin Slee/Guzelian

The simple way
to stop burglary

The Crossley family have never felt so safe. Their council house is part of an experiment that has defeated burglars in a neighbourhood with one of the country's worst records for break-ins.

The message for the rest of the country is that if domestic crime prevention measures are followed to the letter then burglary by forced entry can be almost eliminated.

The Crossleys' home is one of about 300 houses that have had laminated windows and steel-framed doors installed as part of a £31m refurbishment programme funded by Bradford Council which meets security standards set down by West Yorkshire Police.

After 12 months break-ins have almost been eliminated in an area which spans three council estates in Odsal, Brad-

ford where the rate of burglaries at the start of the project was one in 15 homes.

"We can leave the house without worrying," said Steve Crossley, a father of four.

"I know my wife and children are safe when I leave them alone in the house. My neighbours, especially the older ones, are much happier. They can go out at night... knowing their homes won't be smashed up. I have been burgled before and it's a dreadful feeling, it robs you of not just a television or video but your peace of mind."

Constable Steve Town, the crime prevention officer who launched the Bradford experiment, persuaded the council to incorporate the police force's domestic security standards and the results are an 82 per cent reduction in burglaries.

— Esther Leach

SCENES OF DESTRUCTION



1 December 6, 1994: Barclays Bank, Hampstead, north London	2 December 6, 1994: Barclays Bank, Ladbroke Grove, west London	3 December 6, 1994: Barclays Bank, in Hammersmith, west London	4 December 6, 1994: Barclays Bank, Earls Court, west London	5 December 6, 1994: Barclays Bank, Kensington, London	6 December 6, 1994: Barclays Bank, Paddington, London	7 May 19, 1995: Private address in Cambridge	8 June 9, 1995: Pub in Chiswick, west London	9 June 10, 1995: Camera shop in City, London	10 June 20, 1995: Barclaycard HQ in Northampton	11 July 5, 1995: Barclays Bank in Berkhampstead, Hertfordshire	12 July 14, 1995: Private address, in Amersham, Bucks	13 July 15, 1995: Private address in Richmond, Surrey	14 August 19, 1995: Private address in Welling, Kent	15 September 12, 1995: Office in Whitton, Middlesex	16 September 27, 1995: Office in Woolwich, Middlesex	17 October 2, 1995: Ryman, Chiswick, west London	18 October 24, 1995: Phone box in Welling, Kent	19 November 20, 1995: Telephone box in Egham, south-east London	20 December 12, 1995: Private address in Southall, west London	21 December 19, 1995: Telephone box in Acton, west London	22 January 30, 1996: Barclays Bank in Ealing, west London	23 February 5, 1996: Barclays Bank in Ealing, south-east London	24 April 20, 1996: Barclays Bank, in Ealing	25 November 15, 1997: Sainsbury's in Ruislip, Middlesex	26 November 15, 1997: Sainsbury's in Ealing	27 November 15, 1997: Sainsbury's in Greenford, Middlesex	28 November 18, 1997: Sainsbury's, Chislehurst, Kent	29 November 18, 1997: Sainsbury's in Lee Green, south-east London	30 December 18, 1997: Sainsbury's in Ealing
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Ulster peace in jeopardy over delay to new assembly

New institutions for Northern Ireland may not be in place before the next century, even if agreement is reached in the multi-party talks. David McKittrick, Ireland Correspondent, on a dangerous delay.

Unless both the British Government and Parliament decide on a fast-track for the necessary legislation, the new assembly and north-south body may not come into being before late 1999 at the earliest, sources close to the negotiations have told *The Independent*.

This means that even if agreement is reached by the deadline of May next year a potentially dangerous interregnum would result. A senior party source involved in the talks said yesterday: "This has huge implications for the re-creation of conflict. What would people do in the meantime, how would they hold the fort? There would be nowhere for people to engage and maintain momentum."

Under the most optimistic timetable agreement by next May would be followed, fairly promptly, by referendums on both parts of the border. But legislation would not be introduced at Westminster before late next year, and would not pass all its stages before the summer of 1999. The next step would be elections to a new Belfast assembly.

Senior sources say that with a fair wind and goodwill all this could not be accomplished before late 1999, and that delay at any stage means the institutions would not come into being before 2000.

More immediately, two major attempts will be made this week to sustain momentum in the talks and the peace process generally. Today the Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, is to visit Stormont while on Thursday Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness will lead a Sinn Féin delegation to Downing Street to meet Tony Blair.

Within Stormont itself the

participants are still essentially engaged on "talks about talks" rather than substantive negotiations. The form of contacts has been streamlined, however, to a format which the two governments hope will bear fruit by the middle of December.

The new arrangements bring party leaders and their deputies together in one room to compile a list of the main issues and to devise structures for resolving them.

In the meantime, the parties have been more informally mulling over a Unionist idea for a structure which might be called a "council of the British Isles".

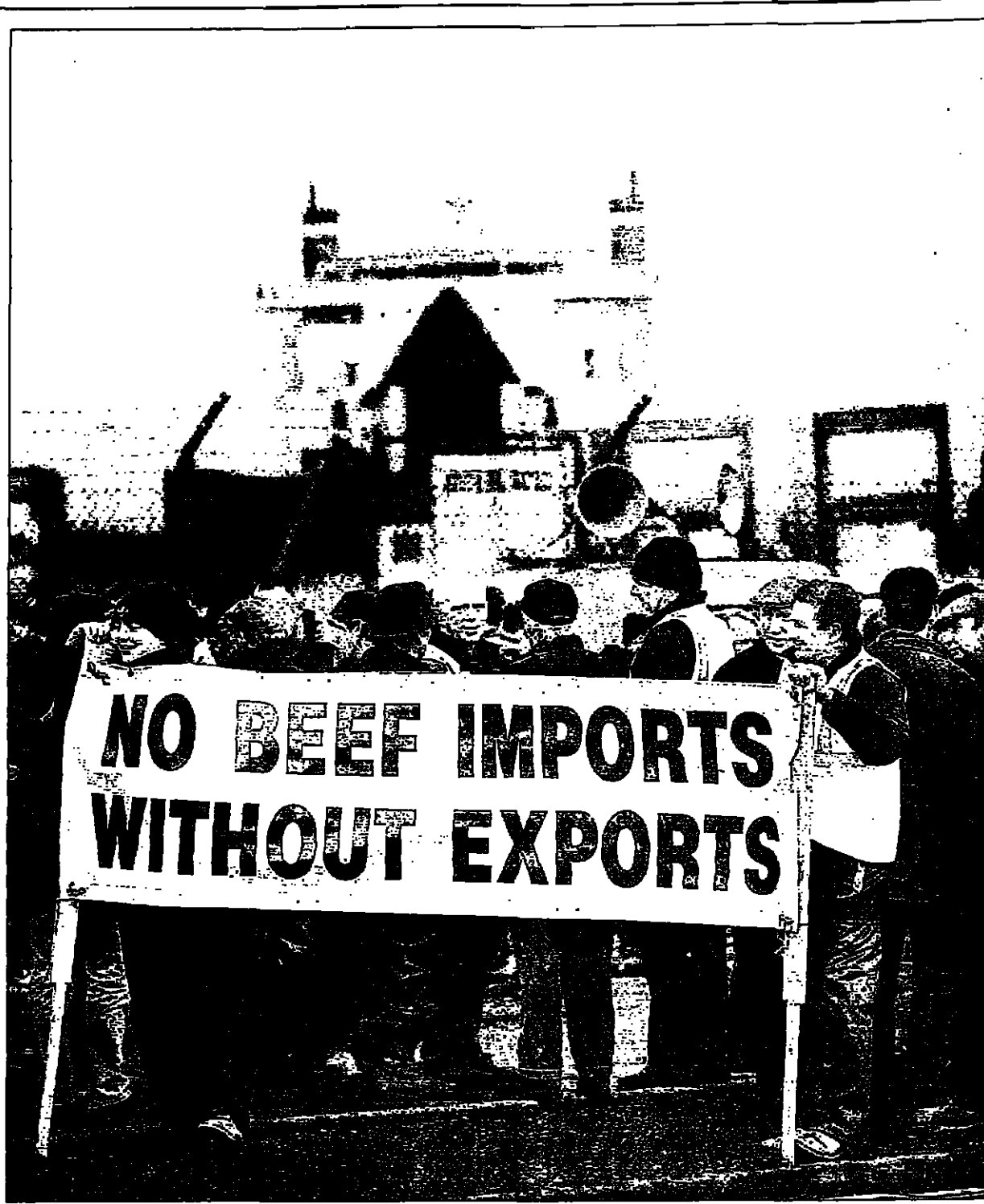
The idea is that a new north-south body could be complemented by institutional links involving not only Dublin and a Belfast assembly but also the proposed assemblies in Scotland and Wales.

The idea has little instinctive appeal to nationalists, carrying as it does overtones of strengthening Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom. Nonetheless, Bertie Ahern has said that the Irish government remains open to innovative approaches and promised to consider it seriously. It may therefore provide a potentially useful starting-point for negotiations between Dublin and the leader of the Ulster Unionists, David Trimble.

Talks participants are meanwhile waiting for more information on the killing of a Catholic man shot dead at a Gaelic Athletic Association club in north Belfast on Friday night. The killing has all the appearances of being a sectarian attack by loyalists.

If the death turns out to be the work of one of the mainstream loyalist paramilitary groups, whose political spokesmen are represented in the talks, there will obviously be renewed questioning of their commitment to democratic methods.

Some sources suggest, however, that it may have been carried by the Loyalist Volunteer Force, a renegade breakaway group which disapproves of the talks process.



Ploughing on: Protesting Scottish farmers at Stranraer yesterday

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

Dover blockade fails as farmers continue protests over beef imports

Farmers continued to gather at British ports yesterday as part of their growing battle against cheap beef imports.

But their attempt to set up a blockade at Dover failed and five were arrested for obstructing the highway. A spokesman for Kent Police said their vehicles had been impounded.

John Redwood, the Tory trade spokesman, voiced his sympathy for the farmers.

"The Conservative Party

does not condone any illegal action but we quite sympathise with the strong stance the farmers are taking because they have been pushed beyond the limits by a Government which has failed to negotiate anything for them," he said.

About 20 tractors and cattle trailers turned round two miles from Dover's eastern docks after police warned them they too would be arrested if they went any further.

Only one tractor and cat-

tle lorry made it to the port entrance, where they were blocked in by a police van.

Hugh Richards, 40, from Biddenden, Kent, condemned the police's "heavy handed tactics" but admitted the bid to halt traffic had failed. "We've told our drivers to go home and we won't try this again."

In Stranraer, Scotland's main Irish ferry port, nearly 200 farmers gathered and hundreds more were expected overnight.

Jim Walker, a Dumfriesshire farmer, said up to 5,000 farmers and sympathisers had offered to come, but organisers did not want such a large crowd.

Peter Rogers, representing farmers in North Wales, said round-the-clock demonstrations at the port of Holyhead on Anglesey would continue. There was also picketing at the Lancashire port of Heysham at the weekend.

Kate Watson-Smyth

'Caring Labour' ploy may mollify lone-parent rebels

Downing Street began a publicity initiative to launch its Social Exclusion Unit yesterday amid unrest from Labour backbenchers over cuts to lone-parent benefits. Fran Abrams and Ian Burrell examine the tactics Labour is using to deflect attention from the revolt.

The Prime Minister's aides say the timing is a coincidence. But privately they must be hoping MPs planning to vote against the Government over benefit cuts on Wednesday may be mollified by the high-profile launch of the unit.

Tony Blair is not the only member of the Government to hold up the unit as an example of new Labour's caring side. It was conceived in August, when Peter Mandelson, Minister without Portfolio, was running for election to the party's National Executive Committee. He was beaten by Ken Livingstone. But as Mr Blair attends the launch at a South London school today he will be confident of winning Wednesday's vote.

But the Prime Minister may have been feeling uncomfortable after MPs' declarations that they intend defying the party leaders over lone parents. Attempts by party whips to persuade them to change their

minds will doubtless be continuing. Last night Iain Duncan-Smith, the Conservatives' Shadow Social Security Secretary, said he believed today's launch had been timed to distract attention from problems over the lone-parent issue. "They are trying to somehow shroud next Wednesday in a sort of smoke-screen."

Yesterday some predicted that 25 of the 200 who have been said to feel uncomfortable about the cuts might go into the "no" lobby. Yet more plan to abstain, though they may be hard to distinguish from those genuinely called away on other business. The rebels have been told they could be deselected, removed from Commons committees or refused time away from the house if they do not comply. One whip even suggested his own job was on the line if he was unsuccessful.

None is prepared to talk publicly about the pressure, but *The Independent* has been given a number of details. Harry Barnes, Labour MP for Derbyshire North West, was threatened with losing his place on the Northern Ireland Select Committee. Whips told him to prolong a trip to the province until the vote was over. This weekend he said it was a "private matter."

Alan Simpson, the Nottingham South MP, was also told to stay away. If he did not, a trip to help South African children would be in jeopardy.

Robinson faces fresh calls to quit over offshore trusts

Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster General, was facing calls for his resignation from Labour backbenchers last night after new revelations about his interests in offshore trusts.

Downing Street is standing by the minister, though, and will today underline its support by giving him a high-profile role in its new Social Exclusion Unit.

The calls for Mr Robinson's resignation came after Sunday newspaper reports suggested that he had links to a series of offshore trusts set up in the tax haven of Bermuda. Last week he was forced to admit that he stood to benefit from the £12 million Orion Trust, based in Guernsey.

Yesterday's reports said that six years ago he had transferred a personal shareholding thought to be worth around

£380,000 from a £6.4 million Robinson family firm to the International Trust Company on Bermuda. There were also claims that the Orion Trust bought nearly £3 million of shares in TransTec, the engineering company Mr Robinson founded, after he joined the government in May 1997.

In total, according to *The Observer*, the Orion Trust had bought £12 million of TransTec shares since September 1996.

Although there has been no suggestion of wrongdoing, Mr Robinson's financial affairs are becoming an increasing embarrassment. Last week he launched the government's Individual Saving Accounts, which limit tax-free savings to £50,000, but was criticised for keeping his own tax to a minimum.

Leading article, page 12

Tory defects to Lib-Dems

The Liberal Democrats claimed a new defector from the Conservatives yesterday, taking the number of senior members who have joined them in recent years to seven.

Peter Price, an MEP from 1979 until 1994, accused William Hague of taking a "Little Englander" stance over the European single currency.

"When William Hague and the Shadow Cabinet decided to

oppose British membership of the single currency for 10 years, however much it proves to be in British interests, they wrote the shortest political suicide note in history. That message signalled that the Conservative Party is now under the control of a group of ideologically-driven people - just as Labour was in the early 80s. The ideology is based on the Little Englander approach."

DAILY POEM

Ambiguous snow

By Norman MacCaig

Snowfalls make no insinuations.
Silence in a white disguise
Happens, without rhetoric
Of slumping clouds and slipshod raindrops.

Posts are mushroomed, roofs are frilled:
Light bangs on the sparkling snow-crust:
Thin wires balance mountain ranges;
Branches break off at the wrist.

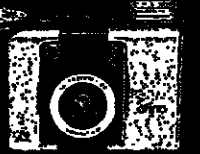
Pretty ambiguity, where
Great stags snither, armies founder
In a mad pastrycook's mad vision,
Pretty in the Christmas candles.

And the word creeps through the snow:
Black as pavements green as crocus;
And the smuggling bud is warm;
And the thrush dies in his feathers.

This week's poems celebrate the Edinburgh poet Norman MacCaig, who was born in the city in 1910 and died there in 1996. They come from his *Selected Poems*, edited by Douglas Dunn and published by Chatto & Windus (£8.99).

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Staff find store chain's line in flirtation at the check out a turn off

A nation-wide stores group's attempt to exploit the twin obsessions of sex and shopping has affronted some of its employees. **Barrie Clement, Labour Editor, on one company's promotion of titillation as a sales technique.**

A supermarket chain is encouraging its check-out operators to flirt with shoppers to increase sales. "Forget the sweet lure of chocolate at the check-out - what male shoppers really want is a little titillation," according to management at the Sainsbury's group.

At a time of growing awareness of sexual harassment, Usdaw, the shopworkers' union,

is not amused. In a "survey" conducted by Sainsbury's, "amazingly" a third of all men agreed they would swap supermarket chains if they could chat up staff. "In a market worth over £63bn a year that could mean millions of pounds of extra business per year," management says in a newsletter.

According to the straw poll, almost half of men would find

their trip to the supermarket more enjoyable if they were served by "flirtatious check-out girls". The survey, conducted in two London stores over a two-day period, also found that women wanted to see more "hunks" at the check-out. "Almost a third admitted to being partial to tasty male check-outs and 29 per cent stated that a quick flirt would be a welcome boost to their ego."

Shopworkers told their union that while some employees had found it funny, others were annoyed. In a letter to the union's journal, Geoffrey Fearn, of the company's Chesterfield shop, wrote that such suggestions put staff in a potentially hazardous situation: "Trying to get women to flirt with male shoppers is not only stupid, but also dangerous. It also degrades women and

men check-out staff and makes them no more than a cheap sales gimmick. People should not be used in this way."

A letter from Romaine Moulton, of Tesco's store in Newport, south Wales, said staff at one store had been subjected to a "10-year reign of terror" after a customer had used name tags to find out their telephone numbers and addresses. They were subjected to verbal

abuse and frightening telephone calls. This is the reality of shop work in today's retail environments. Perhaps Sainsbury's directors would like to sit on the check-outs and 'flirt' with the customers."

John Hannett, deputy general secretary of the union, said he hoped the newsletter was a management "aberration". He argued that flirtatious behaviour could put employees in

"awkward situations".

A spokesman for the company said presentation of the survey was meant to be "light-hearted" and that the message was that people wanted a friendly and efficient service from staff. "Overwhelmingly customers responded that they were drawn to stores where the check-out staff were chatty and approachable. In no way does this condone any form of sex-

Supermarkets prepare to charge more at prime time

Airlines have done it, telephone companies have done it and now supermarkets are looking into doing it too. **Che Gomer says dual pricing, whereby the same goods or services cost more or less depending on when they are bought, could be the latest weapon wheeled out in the trolley wars.**

Retail analysts are researching ways in which supermarkets and high street stores might implement dual-pricing policies which would result in rush-hour shoppers being charged more than day-time shoppers - or indeed those who shop through the night.

Such a policy is the latest initiative with which fierce rivals can capture the market share. The widespread use of loyalty cards means that the technology is already available; and an-

alysts say it is the obvious next step to take in the fiercely competitive market. Where once consumers were simply "rewarded" for how much they bought or what, soon their score in points could depend on when they shopped.

By charging more at weekends and in the evenings, for example, retailers might hope to encourage "time-rich, cash-poor" customers such as pensioners and single mothers to do their shopping in quiet weekday periods. This would leave stores less congested at peak times, making way for "cash-rich, time-poor" shoppers, who would be charged more, but benefit from shorter queues and better service.

Early signs of dual pricing are already being seen at a number of big chains. Boots the chemists has written to 2 million of its 5 million loyalty cardholders offering them double points if they shop between 6pm and 9pm in the run-up to Christmas.

Mercer Management Consulting, one of Britain's biggest

retail consultancies, is said to be looking at "fair and transparent" differential pricing strategies on behalf of several clients, who wish to remain anonymous. "It is certainly one of those things that a lot of companies are very interested in at

the moment," said Matthew Isotta, one of the company's vice-presidents.

Robert Clark, executive director of Corporate Intelligence on Retailing, another London-based consultancy, said: "Having introduced loyalty

cards and generally getting to know more about their individual customers, they have the technology available to identify when people shop and why they don't shop and when they need to be persuaded to shop."

Safeway already offers dis-

counts to mothers with babies under 12 months, who tend to shop weekday mornings when stores are less crowded. However, a spokesman "categorically denied" that the scheme heralded dual pricing in the future. "That's a loyalty issue. It's nothing to do with timing," he said.

But according to Mr Clark now that most stores have loyalty cards it is back to being "a level playing field". Inevitably, retailers will respond by trying "all sorts of increasingly sophisticated electronic tricks".

Not surprisingly, consumers jump at the chance to save money simply by shopping at a certain time. The experiment has been carried out by B&Q's "Diamond Club", which offers a 10 per cent discount to pensioners who shop on a Wednesday.



Trolley wars: Many shoppers could soon find themselves paying more or less for goods and services in retail chains depending on when they shop

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

Dana-image bears create mayhem as America goes wild for latest vogue toy

A Chicago toy company has found the perfect formula for sending all of America round the bend in time for Christmas. It is to take its most popular range - Beanie Babies - and bring out a special edition model in honour of Diana, Princess of Wales. The inevitable result? Shopping mayhem.

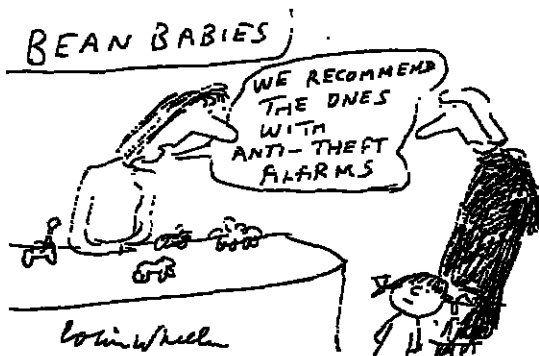
To ensure maximum impact - and maximum nervous-breakdown risk - the company, Ty Inc, is making the special edition a very limited one.

In fact, when the Di Bears hit the streets this morning, millions will be disappointed. That is because only 12 will be supplied to each store that orders them.

Beanie Babies, for the few who may still not know, are small, squishy fabric toys, about 7in high and stuffed with small pellets.

They have emerged in United States at least as one of two or three must-have items on every parent's Christmas list. Beanie Baby mania is striking Britain too.

The only serious competition



for Beanie Babies in the US is so far coming from Sing and Snore Ernie (dressed in his striped pyjamas, he yawns and says "I'm so sleepy") and from Real Talkin' Bubba.

This is a bear that talks and passes comment in a southern drawl. Best of all, if you hang him upside down by his feet, he will say it all backwards.

The hysteria prize last year went to the Tickle Me Elmo toy. It was about this time in December, that supplies of Elmo dried up altogether, sending black-market prices though

the roof. The crisis led some to accuse toy companies of deliberately starving shops of certain toys to stir public frenzy.

Beanie Baby panics occur regularly, because Ty Inc deliberately issues models and just when their popularity is peaking, retire them again.

Such was the fate of Peanut the Elephant recently. Old Peanuts have been trading over the Internet for more than \$2,200 (£1,350). (Recommended price: \$4.99).

The Princess Di Baby will be a small bear fitted with a white

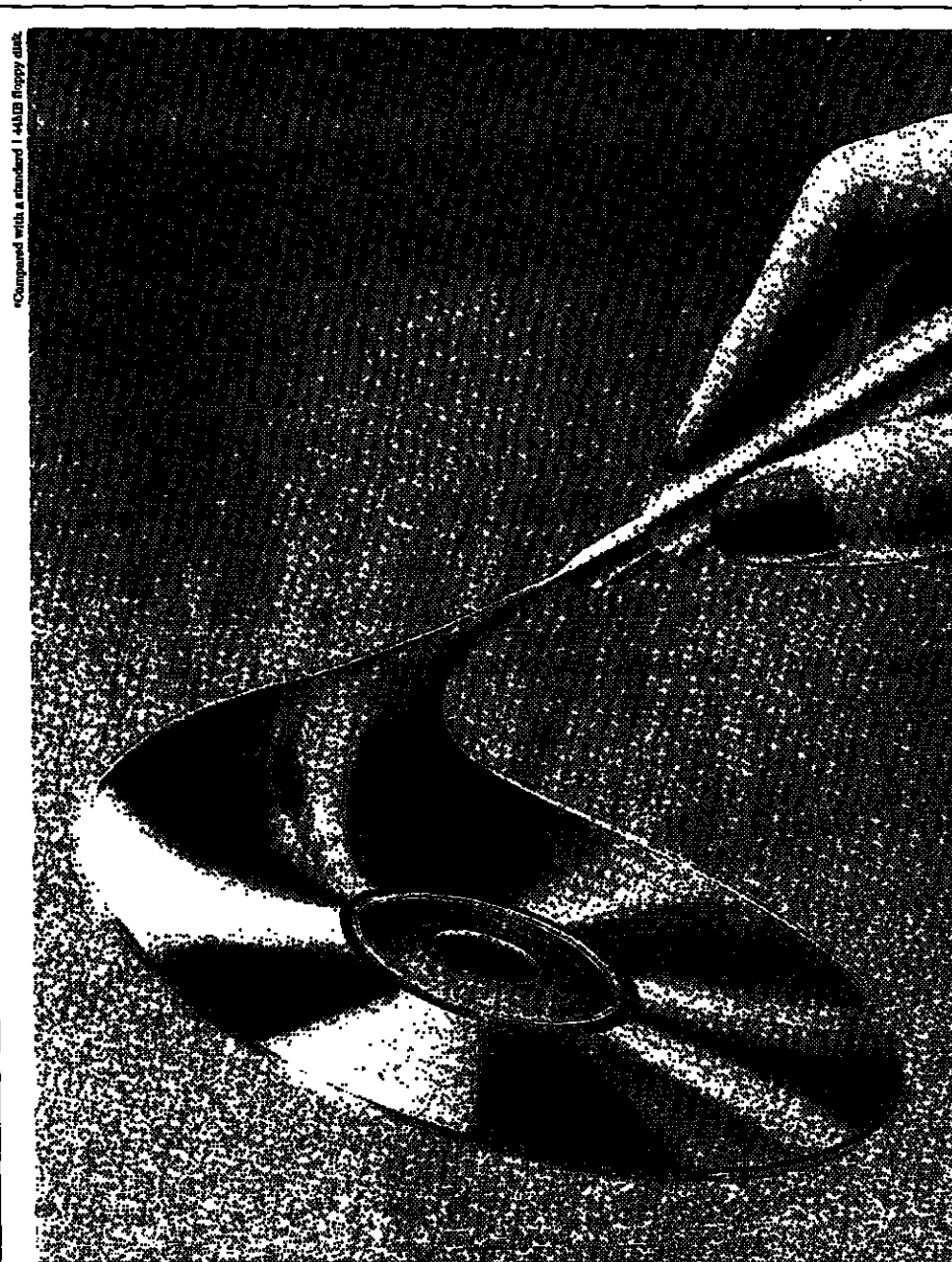
embroidered rose and a purple satin ribbon. The problem for shops today will be handling demand and preventing violence. "I bet some stores are preparing for a riot," remarked Lola Cardenas, owner of a Chicago card shop.

Scores of shop owners have logged on to web sites dedicated to the toys with suggestions on coping with the stampede. Many are getting ready for Diana lotteries, or silent auctions and plan to give the proceeds to local charities.

For some it seems to be getting to be too much. "Actually I prayed about this," one retailer, who is planning a silent auction, confessed. "I truly love people and making their dreams come true. It is in giving that we receive and through sales of beanie babies I have met some great people."

Ty, by the way, will be giving its proceeds from the bears to the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund.

— David Osborne
New York



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NCT resolves row over Sainsbury deal

The National Childbirth Trust, which has been involved in a long-running dispute between members over sponsorship by Sainsbury's, has now changed its mind and decided it cannot, after all, accept the deal.

One of the trustees who

originally voted to accept sponsorship have resigned but a spokeswoman for the charity said their decision was not connected to the about-turn following the row about Sainsbury's own breast-milk substitute and they they had wanted to leave following "a difficult year".

She insisted there was no dispute between NCT and the trustees, who include Ruth Stone, the chair, Jane Langridge, the treasurer, and Janet Neale, the secretary, and said they were still active in their support for the NCT.

The charity sent out a questionnaire about sponsorship to its members after trustees voted to accept sponsorship from Sainsbury's, which sells its own baby-milk substitute.

Although Sainsbury's does not manufacture the formula, it sells it under its own label which many members felt could be seen as endorsing the store's own-brand formula and thus compromise the position of a charity which strongly promotes breastfeeding.

The results of the survey showed the NCT was split down the middle with 43 per cent of the volunteer workers in favour of sponsorship and 46 per cent against.

But among those who had had training about breastfeeding the figure was 79 per cent against.

It is believed the trustees felt forced to resign in the face of such overwhelming opposition.

Earlier this year, 40 breast-

feeding counsellors resigned over the issue and some went on to form a rival organisation, the Breastfeeding Network. It is unlikely they will return.

Caroline King, a member of the trust who was against the sponsorship deal, said she was pleased at the change of heart but saddened at the cost to the NCT.

"We have lost a great deal of talent and experience and we are not going to get it back," she said.

"This began because there was a need for more and more money which got out of control and it felt as if we did not care how we got this money as long as we did get it."

"It has split the NCT in half and I do not know if it will recover."

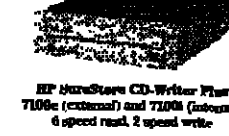
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10/KYOTO SUMMIT

Developers destroy the city of good intentions

Kyoto is said to be Japan's most beautiful city. But Richard Lloyd Parry says the city now hosting a great world environmental summit is being destroyed by the developers

Kyoto, they say, is the most beautiful city in Japan, but you would never think so to look at it. Arriving here by train, as thousands of people have for this month's summit, is one of the world's great travel disappointments. In front of the station is a choked tarmac plaza of buses and taxis, overshadowed by a hideous tower painted in red and white.

After a day or two, the city's beauties - its temples and old wooden neighbourhoods - emerge shyly out of the general clutter. But for much of the time Kyoto is just a wealthy, ugly, chaotically ill-planned city. To many Kyoto people, the situation is getting worse.

In the past five years, and in the face of strong local opposition, the city administration has aggressively pushed through a series of controversial projects which are changing the look of Kyoto for ever.

The climate summit negotiations on global warming have put the situation in ironic focus: a UN environment conference, held in a city whose historical appearance is being swept away by a wave of construction.

"Kyoto's traditional environment is being destroyed so quickly," says Shincho Tanaka, chief priest of the ancient Shimo-in temple.

"The strange look of these buildings, the height of the houses, the pinball parlours and supermarkets. Kyoto is 1,200 years old, but the idea of historical continuity is completely lost on the government."

Three projects have galvanised opposition, although so far the government has refused to give an inch to its opponents. In 1994 the old Kyoto Hotel was replaced with a glass-and-concrete structure twice the original height, ruining the city's low-rise skyline. Then there was the new railway station, a 60-metre-tall, 200-metre-wide oblong which opened this year in defiance of more protests. Now attention is on a

third struggle - the battle of the President's Bridge.

The story began a year ago at a banquet in Tokyo attended by Kyoto's mayor, Yorikane Matsumoto, and his former Parisian counterpart, the French president, Jacques Chirac. 1998 marks the 40th anniversary of the Paris-Kyoto sister-city relationship and, to mark it, Mr Chirac had a bold suggestion: a replica of the Pont des Arts would be built over Kyoto's equivalent of the Seine, the Kamo river.

Mr Matsumoto enthusiastically announced it on his return. The response of fellow citizens was less warm. "Our first reaction was shock - people thought he must be kidding," says Marc Keane, a landscape gardener and chairman of the International Society to Save Kyoto. "But apart from the dumbness of the idea, there's the complete failure of the city to consult with anyone. Even in Paris, there was eight years of debate before the original Pont des Arts was built. Our mayor made up his mind and announced it in three days."

Mr Tanaka said: "These bureaucrats don't appreciate the difference between French culture and Japanese culture. The river is alive... and we have to respect it... I don't really want any new bridge, but if there is a new one, it should be a small, pretty wooden bridge, not something like this."

You don't have to be a Buddhist priest or landscape designer to question the wisdom of the project, and the appropriateness of a French bridge to a traditional Japanese city.

The former is an undeniably elegant structure of curving iron arches; the latter are characterised by wood, bamboo and natural materials in delicate and subdued structures. To some, the battle has been lost and one more construction project can do no more to harm an already ruined city. All over Japan, there are links between city officials and the construction industry - Kyoto's own construction chief was recently arrested for allegedly accepting bribes in connection with a subway line. And beyond the official arrogance, the bridge's opponents see a deeper and longer-term problem - Kyoto's inferiority complex about its own culture and its relationship with the rest of the world.



Bright future: Kyoto children with a globe which expresses hopes for a clean, beautiful planet

How climate takes its toll on Japan

The worst fears of environmentalists are being realised in the very city where the UN is meeting to discuss global warming. Richard Lloyd Parry in Kyoto reports on the toll which climate change is taking on Japan's most traditional symbols.

Every autumn, as the maple leaves turn red the hills around Kyoto catch fire in a blaze of colours which draws tourists from all over Japan. Travel agencies run maple-leaf tours and maple-leaf weekend breaks.

The Buddhist temples are crammed with amateur cameramen photographing the most elegant specimens. The leaves are celebrated as much for their transience as their beauty - by the end of November, the trees are bare, the paths are swept and the leaves float up in the smoke of countless bonfires.

But not this year. As the UN's conference on global warming rolls towards its uncertain conclusion, Kyoto is obliging environmentalists by experiencing unprecedentedly warm weather. Since delegates arrived a week ago, there has been one brief snowfall: for the rest of the time conditions have been almost spring-like, with sunshine, clear skies and temperatures as high as 21°C. The autumn colours are still blazing, and the hills around the city have wide patches of green.

Between 1986 and 1996, according to statistics gathered by Friends of the Earth, the average December temperature of Kyoto was 5.3°C to 8.4°C, with an average maximum of 12.9°C. This year they have gone as high as 21°C: activists have little doubt about the cause. "It's another side of global warming," says Tony Juniper, of Friends of the Earth. "When Al Gore arrives tomorrow in his air-conditioned limousine, and drives up to his air-conditioned hotel for his carefully controlled meeting, I hope he'll consider the uncontrolled things that are happening in the outside world."

Whether Kyoto's winter warmth is really a result of global warming or just a random weather variation is difficult to prove. But the autumn colours are not the only Japanese symbol to suffer from rising temperatures. This year the mantle of snow on the volcanic cone of Mt Fuji is thinner than ever and a creeper known as pioneer plant is crawling higher up the mountain. Areas which used to be skiing grounds, "I started caring for this mountain around 1977," said Tei Takagi, a former forestry officer who lives near it. "At that time, come October and November, the mountain would be covered with about two metres of snow."

Recently, it has been sparse even on the 3,776m summit, where the average temperature has risen to -8.3°C, compared with -10.7°C in the 1940s.

Is the Government's target for greenhouse gas just so much hot air?

The Government says Britain will cut its carbon dioxide pollution by 20 per cent by 2010. In the first of a two-part series, Nicholas Schoon asks if ministers are serious about this target - and, if so, how can it be reached?

It was there in black and white in the party's manifesto, and has been repeated since the election by Tony Blair. Britain will cut its annual emissions of the main greenhouse gas to 80 per cent of its 1990 level over the next dozen years.

It remains to be seen if this target survives very long after the rest of the developed world signs up in Kyoto to far more modest cuts on Wednesday. But the fact is that Britain could do

it, and lead the world in tackling climate change.

It would change the life of every family and the workings of most businesses over the next 10 years. Wind turbines would become as common as high-tension pylons.

We would have a cleaner country, since other kinds of pollution would reduce sharply, and a more efficient one. Our cities might be a little more densely packed, and our econ-

omy would continue to grow. In fact, it might make Britain rather more like Japan.

UK emissions have fallen by 5 per cent since 1990, due mainly to changes in the way we generate electricity. The proportion which comes from burning coal has fallen drastically, but last week Mr Blair stepped on the brake to try to help the coal industry.

The trend is for emissions to rise with economic growth. As Britons get wealthier they want

to fly more, drive more, buy more power-hungry gadgets. Without new policies, UK emissions will be 2 per cent higher in 2010 than in 1990, says the Energy Technology Support Unit (ETSU), the Government's leading energy advisers.

Falling gas and electricity bills are encouraging people to consume more energy. Only petrol and diesel prices are bucking the trend because the Government is committed to

raising road fuel duties above the rate of inflation.

"The next steps are altogether more difficult," said Dr Jim Skea, director of the Economic and Social Research Council's global environmental change programme. "We need a transport, energy, fiscal and technology policy that reflects climate concerns."

Most experts agree that to hit the target there would have to be higher household and in-

dustrial energy taxes - something the Government is loathe to contemplate. Some of the money those taxes raise will have to be redirected into energy-saving incentives. Simply taxing fuel more "has little chance of success," says Dr David Carlless, of ETSU, "and every chance of creating large areas of resentment".

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11/WORLD NEWS

World Cup
proves draw
for Colombia
kidnappers

Guerrilla warfare is forcing tens of thousands of Colombians from their homes – and the president's press spokesman has been kidnapped. Our Latin America correspondent Phil Davison reports on drug-fuelled violence in the land of England's World Cup opponents.

William Parra, press secretary and spokesman for Ernesto Samper, the Colombian President, has become the country's latest kidnapping victim.

Mr Parra was abducted, apparently by gunmen in the pay of drug traffickers, as he left the presidential palace last Thursday to watch the World Cup draw on television in which Colombia was drawn in the same group as England. One of the country's leading reporters, Lis Eduardo Maldonado of the RCN radio network, who was with Mr Parra, was also taken.

A group calling itself the Extraditables, previously known to represent the Medellín cocaine cartel, said it was holding the men, apparently to put pressure on President Samper's government not to extradite drug lords to the United States. The President issued a weekend statement demanding the immediate release of the two men.

The kidnappings were the latest blow to the beleaguered president, who has been accused of using cocaine cartel cash in his 1994 election campaign, and whose country is largely run by

influential and heavily armed drug cartels, two Marxist guerrilla groups and a batch of right-wing paramilitary organisations.

The Extraditables was the name used by Medellín cartel boss Pablo Escobar and his lieutenants in the late-Eighties and early-Nineties to claim responsibility for a campaign of violence. Thousands of people, including politicians, policemen and journalists, were killed in an attempt to discourage Colombian leaders from heeding US calls for extradition. The campaign worked, until last week, when Colombia agreed to reinstate extradition to the US.

But as Christmas approaches, Mr Samper's most pressing concern is food and housing for the latest refugees forced from their homes by a war fought by Marxist guerrillas and right-wing paramilitary groups. After three decades of kidnappings and extortion by guerrillas, the paramilitaries sprang up to wreak revenge and protect landowners.

The two sides rarely clash directly. But in recent weeks, the paramilitaries have carried out a string of rural massacres, picking out relatives of guerrillas or peasants they suspect of aiding the Marxists. In the past two weeks gunmen, widely believed to receive support from the Colombian army, have killed 60 people, shooting them in the head in front of their families.

The government has offered a reward of £500,000 for the capture of Carlos Castano, the best-known paramilitary leader, of whom President Samper said recently "we will pursue all the way to Hell if necessary".



Claws out: Chelsea Clinton holds the First Cat, Socks, while President Bill Clinton fields questions from viewers during a live television show from the White House hosted by the ABC anchorman, Peter Jennings (right)

Move over Socks: the Clintons acquire a First Dog

It's been a bad winter for First Cats. No sooner has Humphrey been booted out of Number 10, than it is revealed that his American opposite number, Socks, will have to share the White House with a DOG.

Washington is abuzz with the news that the Clintons have decided on the addition to their household of a three-month old puppy.

Said animal, a chocolate-brown Labrador-retriever cross, was taken to

visit his new owners for their approval last week, spent half an hour undergoing the presidential-compatibility test on the White House lawn, and was then immediately whisked away for training.

The First Dog obedience course, according to the White House, will not – at least in the first instance – be about retrieving President Clinton's golf balls, but rather more basic: "like not on the Oval Office rug".

said a White House spokesman.

The arrival of the dog – as yet unnamed – will allow President Clinton to claim his place in a long line of White House dog-owners.

His four predecessors all had dogs – George Bush's late lamented spaniel, Millie, was the most recent First Dog. A First Cat was something of a departure.

In gossip-ridden Washington views differ about the reasons for the new arrival.

Are the President and Mrs Clinton pining for their daughter, Chelsea – now in her first year at Stanford University in California – so much that they need another focus for their affections?

Has Chelsea's departure left Socks without a patron sufficiently powerful to protect his interests?

Is the President feeling his age to the point where he is giving up jogging for dog-walking?

Or is he so fed up with his security detail that he is considering alternatives?

The favoured explanation is that the rarefied world of Washington politics and Hillary's whistle-stop world tours may finally be getting to him.

Much quoted over the weekend has been President Harry Truman's quip: "If you need a friend in Washington, get a dog."

Well, he just did.

— Mary Dejevsky
Washington

Third bushfire
fighter dies

A volunteer fire-fighter died in an Australian hospital yesterday, after he collapsed while extinguishing small fires left after a bushfire to the south of Sydney.

Phil Koperberg, New South Wales Rural Fire Services Commissioner, said yesterday that Peter Edward Estcourt, 30, died 14 hours after being airlifted to hospital. Estcourt was the third volunteer bush-fire fighter to lose his life since a series of fires ravaged the NSW region a week ago.

— Reuters, Sydney

Israeli union strike

Israel's Histadrut trade union federation was expected to sign an agreement with the Treasury last night which would end Israel's most devastating strike for years.

Uncollected garbage has heaped up in the streets and queues formed at bank cash-point and petrol stations as the general strike, involving some 700,000 workers, slowly closed down the country. Earlier, Amir Peretz, the union leader, said "dramatic progress" had been made after the president of the labour court put forward a compromise. The Histadrut wants the Treasury to honour a pension deal signed with the previous Labour government.

— Patrick Cockburn, Jerusalem

Murdoch's dodge

Even though he is an American citizen, the media tycoon Rupert Murdoch pays much less tax than other US magnates in the same field by exploiting opportunities available to a global corporation, which include the use of tax havens. Figures for the past fiscal year, published by the *Washington Post*, show that his company, News Corp, reported paying \$103m (£65m) on operating income of \$1.32bn, that is, 7.8 per cent, compared with 28 per cent paid by the Walt Disney Co, and 17 per cent by Time Warner Inc.

— Mary Dejevsky, Washington

Truffle wars

Two truffle-hunting dogs were killed by poison in central Italy at the weekend, bringing the total of dogs killed by strychnine since the season began in October to more than 30. The price of the edible fungus has recently soared to around 2.5m lire (£900) per kilo, and police believe someone is seeking to put the opposition out of action.

— Reuters, Perugia

Milosevic benefits from Serbian apathy at the polling booths

Serbiens voted to elect a president yesterday, for the second time in three months. But widespread apathy suggested little prospect of reaching the 50 per cent turnout needed to validate the results.

Andrew Gumbel in Belgrade reports on an impasse that can only benefit Slobodan Milosevic.

Everybody knew this was going to be a lacklustre campaign. But last Tuesday the whole country was made to realise what pathetic, puerile stuff its prospective future leaders were made of. Vojislav Seselj, the frontrunner in September's inconclusive poll and a notorious hardline nationalist, held a live television debate with one of his biggest rivals, the erstwhile anti-Milosevic campaigner Vuk Draskovic.

At first Mr Seselj, who has a track record

of making verbal and physical threats on the small screen, surprised everyone by playing the mature politician, doing his best to sound sweetly reasonable about the depressed economy, the backlog of unpaid pensions and state salaries, and the thorny political question of autonomy for the Albanian-majority province of Kosovo.

But then Mr Draskovic accused Mr Seselj of being a bad Serb with a suspiciously high proportion of Croatian blood. Mr

Seselj looked flustered at first, then threw the same accusation back in Mr Draskovic's face. Since the two men have close family ties, the insults soon became downright personal. What was supposed to be a debate about the country's future turned into a racist slanging match.

The truth is, both men are a severe embarrassment – Mr Seselj because of his rabid political opinions and his tendency to have his opponents beaten up, Mr

Draskovic because his claim to represent the democratic opposition that spent last winter marching against the Milosevic regime looks more tenuous every day. Most of the moderates in his party have walked out on him. The rest of the pro-democracy movement are boycotting the election.

That leaves just one other leading contender, the Yugoslav Foreign Minister Milan Milutinovic, who is a Milosevic man through and through. But he is also

endlessly bland, a poor campaigner and a man with a past as a scourge of anti-establishment intellectuals under Tito.

The most likely scenario is another in-quorate election, and another round of voting next spring. Without a president, Serbia cannot form a government. The power vacuum leaves just one man with a real job, Mr Milosevic. Although his post as Yugoslav federal president is largely honorary, no one is in a position to challenge his supremacy.

Christmas Day

25

December

"Thanks ever so much for the jumper..."

Boxing Day

26

December

"No, really, I do like it, honest..."

New Year's Day

1

January

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Offshore funds and a rich dilemma for Labour



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The very rich are different from you and me, as Hemingway pointed out, because they have more money. And because they have more money, they employ accountants who will draw up trust deeds, advise on tax efficiency and put large amounts of it in Guernsey, Jersey or Bermuda.

It should come as no surprise, then, that Geoffrey Robinson, the Treasury minister, should benefit from a Guernsey trust fund. Or that, when the story of his family finances is followed through public records it should lead to Bermuda trusts apparently named after his nieces. Mr Robinson is a multi-millionaire, possibly worth more than £30m, a businessman before – and especially since – he became an MP. He was also left a lot of money by a Belgian former business associate of his, the satisfyingly named Mme Bourgeois, which was the origin of the Guernsey trust.

These are interesting arrangements, in the sense that the private lives of the very rich are bound to appear exotic to the rest

of us, although they in no way justify the extravagant attentions of yesterday's newspapers. There is nothing improper about the way his affairs are organised, and Mr Robinson appears to have followed scrupulously the rules for ministers in respect of his private finances.

And yet ... There is something faintly alarming about the arrival in power of an aggressively pro-business Labour Party so blissfully unaware of the dangers of being hoist by the petards which it used with such relish in opposition.

Tony Blair's glee that the chairman of BP had agreed to serve in a Labour government led him to overlook the minor detail of Lord Simon's £2m shareholding. Lord Simon could not sell it, because he might be accused of profiting from inside knowledge about BP's prospects. So he kept it, but no bright-eyed civil servant pointed out that he was just as likely to be accused of profiting from inside knowledge by hanging on to it. Not only that,

he now also risked compromising his ministerial judgement. Nor did it help that a quarter of the shares were held for him by BP in a Jersey trust, presumably in order to reduce either his or BP's tax bill.

Tax avoidance is the tricky concept at the heart of the present issue. There is a clear moral distinction to be drawn between avoidance and evasion, and most taxpayers try not to pay more tax than they have to. For most, the mechanics are simple, such as claiming tax relief on mortgage payments or pension contributions. But for the very rich it is worthwhile to use tax havens and trusts. It is not ideal that most of the economic activity in parts of the United Kingdom and its dependencies should simply consist of the reduction of rich people's tax liability. There is a case for saying these places should either be part of the UK paying taxes and represented in Parliament or they should be independent, but in practice it makes sense that they should remain half

in and half out, within reach of British law.

Equally, it would be oppressive to legislate against trusts. The discretionary trust is a dodge; the claim of avoidance rather than evasion contains an element of disingenuity. Legally, the trustees have discretion over to whom they hand out the money; in practice, they give it to the person they first thought of. But you cannot tax intentions. Nor, in the case of Mr Robinson, can he do anything about the constitution of the trust fund set up for him by Mme Bourgeois.

The fun really started when Mr Robinson announced changes to Tessa and Peps, the tax-avoidance devices of the middle classes. He was denounced as a hypocrite for capping tax-exempt savings at £50,000 and seeking to spread the subsidy to poorer people who could not afford to put money away for five years. But this is just the eye-of-the-needle fallacy: that rich people cannot favour redistribution, or that individual rich ministers cannot sponsor

measures which favour the poor. The trouble is that it is a fallacy that has been encouraged, indirectly, by the Government itself. On the one hand, it has harnessed the skills of some talented people who have, unsurprisingly, used those talents in the private sector to amass piles of money. On the other, it has presented itself as ushering in the dawn of a "new politics", in which the highest possible standards of conduct in public life will be observed.

This is compounded by an emphasis on presentation and surface perceptions. If Gordon Brown thinks that Princes William and Harry should pay £7m inheritance tax on Diana's estate because it would look bad to try legally to avoid doing so, then logically he and his ministers should adopt a Gandhian moral posture and Mr Robinson should hand over all his worldly wealth, either to the Treasury or to cancer charities. Perhaps it is time for the Government to seize the slightly more realistic moral ground.

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number. Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk. E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

LETTERS

Faith and blame

Sir: Robert Fisk's "Religion in the Middle East: the fundamental problem" (3 Dec 1997) was very thought-provoking, and I must congratulate him for his courage in highlighting the threat from fundamentalists belonging to Judaism and Christianity. The media in the West goes out of its way to tarnish the image of Islam by associating "terrorism" and "fundamentalism" to it, while ignoring the militant and terrorist activities associated with other religions. Robert Fisk has a more enlightened outlook.

It is true that religious fanatics have a lot to answer for, and their desire for dominating others and enforcing their own ideals and beliefs on them has been the subject of many historians and religious commentators. While I cannot speak for Jews or Christians, as a Muslim, I find it ironic that Islam (which means peace and submission) has become so politicised and in places like Afghanistan and Algeria, so barbaric. The fault for much of this of course lies at the hands of modern Muslims, but the West or Christendom has played no small part in the growth of Muslim fundamentalism.

Would it be too difficult for the West even to pretend to be impartial in dealing with Israel and the Arabs? Even if one tries to understand the historical and cultural prejudices that lead to this blind support for Israel, why does the West go on supporting the fundamentalist state of Saudi Arabia? It is true that Saudi Arabia has lots of oil and so the West has nurtured it as one of its closest allies, but what about its support of the dreaded "fundamentalists", which the Western media keeps on going about?

Clearly the rise of Muslim fundamentalism has nothing to do with the holy city of Mecca or the Quran – it has much more to do with the inequalities and injustices of the modern world which values oil more than human and cultural relationships, and that is bent on settling old historical scores. A powerful and manipulative West has failed to understand the consequences of decades of frustration among the powerless Muslim masses in the Middle East.

Dr MOHAMMED IOBAL
Bradford, West Yorkshire

Rich world's pollution

Sir: Sue Birley (letter, 2 December) draws attention to the relationship between population and total carbon dioxide emissions of developed countries. From a global point of view, the country with the most alarmingly high population and growth rate is not any developing country like China or India, but the USA. Americans are responsible for far more fossil fuel consumption per head than any other people, and their population is continuing to grow rapidly.

Internationally, one of the most widely acceptable formulae for allocating CO2 emission reductions between the nations of the world, is to allow each country a CO2 quota per existing head of population. The poorest countries, having a low present use of fossil fuels, would not have to cut back so much, and the poorest could even expand. The rich countries would be the ones that had to make cuts – the very ones with

the capacity and technology to do so. But this approach would also bring home to everyone the relationship between total numbers and wealth. The rich countries would discover that it is they, and not the Third World, that are the truly over-populated ones.

CHRISTOPHER PADLEY
Market Rasen, Lincolnshire

Opera's silence

Sir: So the first act of the Royal Opera House drama has ended. Lord Chladin has resigned, the Board has fallen on its collective sword and Mary Allen soldiers on, supported, we learn, by the senior management and artistic direction of the House.

But surely the artistic directors should be taking a close look at their own record. They must be responsible for at least some of the overspending and it was their artistic judgement which selected programmes and productions which played

to part-empty houses at The Barbican, Labatt's Apollo and The Shaftsbury, despite widespread publicity and savage cuts in ticket prices.

JUDITH CRUIKSHANK
London

Lone parent's plea

Sir: I urge your readers to consider the following points and to lobby Parliament against the proposal to abolish lone parent benefits on 10 December.

1. Lone parents are embarking on years of unpaid and often isolating and demoralising work in bringing up children on their own. This work is done also on behalf of the absent parent. One person carries the responsibility and struggle where once there were two.

2. This marginalised group, in most cases, of women and children are living already on the breadline according to the Government's own analysis. This is supported by both statutory

and voluntary organisations concerned with child poverty, and family health and welfare.

3. Why are working women discriminated against by the CSA? When will child care costs be included in the maintenance payments of the absent parent?

4. There will be a strong disincentive to work after April, as new claimant parents will be significantly worse off if they find themselves unemployed, their child care falls through, or they can't do the juggling act of being superwoman/man at home and in the market place.

5. Why are parents with under-school-age children being penalised with benefit cuts?

6. Where is this plethora of affordable or free child care provision? Why not wait and see if it materialises first? Current research on the success of the Welfare back to Work scheme have been very disappointing.

7. Instead of being so punitive why doesn't the Government congratulate lone parents for having the sense of responsibility

for staying with their children in the first place, and the courage and stamina to carry on despite the abuse that is poured upon them.

SUSAN TWYMAN
Lewes, East Sussex

A bone to pick

Sir: Mark Evans (letter, 6 December) asked how the Government could continue to allow sales of cigarettes while preventing the sale of beef on the bone, when the risk of death from the former far exceeds the risk from the latter.

I for one would be perfectly happy to see beef on the bone for sale in shops if it carried a government health warning like cigarettes do. This seems far more sensible than an outright ban every time the Government uncovers some potential hazard, whether it be from beef, chicken, eggs, apples, or genetically altered soya.

RICHARD BARTLE
West Bergholt, Essex

Museum charges

Sir: At the age of 14 I became fascinated by minerals. On a free day I would arrive at the gates of the British Museum (Natural History), as it was called in those days, before opening time, with a textbook and notebook and study till closing time, thus learning a great deal before going to university.

Later, I took my students to the Mineral Gallery to teach them, using this world class collection. Seven of my students are or were members of staff of that department, one reaching the rank of Keeper.

Mine is the story of one individual, whose life has been very greatly enriched by free access to this wonderful mineral collection. We shall never know how many fail to reap similar benefits, due to the introduction of admission charges. I make an earnest plea for free entry to the Natural History Museum and other museums for all people, from school

children to scholars, to enrich the cultural heritage of this country.

A F SEAGER
Emeritus Reader in Mineralogy,
University of London
Egham, Surrey

Sir: The proposed introduction of admission charges to our national museums and galleries is a pernicious idea and must be vigorously resisted.

It can't be denied that the imposition of admission fees will inevitably prevent the least well off in society benefiting from and enjoying our rich national collections. As a Londoner growing up in Brixton with very limited resources, my only exposure to "high culture" was from visits to the Tate Gallery, National Gallery and the British Museum. These visits greatly enriched my life and nurtured my passion for the visual arts. However, had there been admission charges, that would not have been possible.

The introduction of admission charges would, at a stroke, make art exclusive. For many people – and there are thousands of them – day-to-day life is a struggle.

How on earth can a Labour government justify such a parsimonious attitude towards our great national collections, while at the same time defending, without hesitation, spending £400-plus million on the Millennium Dome, a scheme with very limited life expectancy and which does not enjoy widespread popular support.

KEVIN DRISCOLL
London

Fire without smoke

Sir: After reading the article (Saturday, 6 December) on whether papers should be recycled or burnt, I think recycling is the only option for *The Independent*.

With a Scottish nanny in the household we have both the *Daily Record* and *The Independent* each day.

When starting an open coal fire with the *Daily Record* the fire always starts with ease. When using *The Independent* the fire takes considerable coaxing to burn.

What does this say about the properties of *The Independent* compared to other papers? My wife thinks nothing burns like rubbish.

ANDREW COLLINS
Guildford, Surrey

The Vindaloo Vic shows the art of arts sponsorship



MILES KINGTON

Today – a business story for our times! A brand-new yarn entitled "The Person You Have Rung Knows You Are Calling". Yes, it's a rip-roaring tale of gritty Northern know-how, and cut-throat arts sponsorship!

Once upon a time there was a struggling drama group which believed that it could really go places if only it could get some money.

"Money!" said Mickey, the group manager. "We need money! With money we could go places!"

"And even if we didn't go places, we could at least get out of Yorkshire."

"We all joined this group to get away from the money-jun-

gle," said Sheila, the director. "Now we're even more worried about it than ever. Look at the Royal Opera House! They're millions of pounds in debt! Does it worry them?"

"They've got sponsorship," said Doug morosely. Doug was the member of the group who said things morosely. There's always one.

"In fact, things have got so bad at the Royal Opera House you almost expect things to be reversed, and the Opera House start endorsing banks. 'Hi there – we're the Royal Opera House, and we've got the biggest overdraft of all time, so naturally we're glad that Barclays Bank is looking after it!'"

The thought was so de-

pressing that Doug felt momentarily cheered.

"We haven't got a whisper of sponsorship," said Mickey. "and we're not likely to."

"Not true," said Phoebe, the actress. "We got the Balti House to sponsor us. Remember? In Arnold Wesker's *The Kitchen*?"

It was true. The local Balti House had indeed sponsored them, but only to the extent of supplying the food. The take-aways had turned up 10 minutes before curtain up and the actors had tucked in voraciously on stage as they performed. It was their evening meal, after all.

"Do you remember how involved Mr Balti got?" said Sheila. "He really loved being

around the theatre. Given half a chance he would have acted in the play..."

"That's a great idea!" said Mickey. "You might be on to something here!"

"Sorry?" said Sheila. It's always depressing when you say something intelligent without realising that you have.

"Well, when a theatre group approaches a firm for funding, it just sounds like begging. Give us your money and we'll put your name in the programme... It's not much of an incentive, is it?"

"The theatre group never offers anything in return. Wouldn't it be nice to go to the big boss of the firm and offer him something nice in return for money?"

"What can we offer?" said Phoebe.

"A part in the play," said Mickey.

"A what?" said Doug morosely but very loudly.

"I would be willing to wager," said Mickey, "that one in 10 businessmen has a secret urge to go on stage. Find the right one, and we have a deal. He gets a small part and the chance to fulfil a secret dream – we get the money!"

Mickey felt no confidence when he said this. But he was wrong. After knocking on the doors of eight local firms he found Roger Dunstable, the managing director of a business which specialised in laying pipelines in difficult terrain and through difficult planning

regulations. Roger Dunstable was known to be hot stuff when it came to laying pipelines. What none of his colleagues knew was that he had always wanted to go on stage. "What play would you offer me a part in?" said Roger, making sure the door was closed and nobody could hear. "I would only want a very small part."

"Well," said Mickey, "for our first production next year we're going to kick off with a thriller, for which we need a corpse."

"A corpse?" said Roger. "You want someone just to lie there? You want my firm to hand over hundreds of pounds..."

"Thousands of pounds," said Mickey.

to lie dead on a stage?"

"Oh, no," said Mickey hastily. "You get things to say first! You have a little scene with the leading lady. You say two very funny things. Then you get shot. It's a great cameo role! And if you want, you could change and come on in the second act as a press photographer."

Roger thought. It was a ludicrous idea. On the other hand, he would never get a chance like this again.

"Done," he said.

How will the managing director of a pipeline firm make out in his first attempt to be a corpse? Find out tomorrow in the concluding episode of "The Person You Have Rung Knows You Are Calling!"

Politics in proportion kills passion



JOHN REDWOOD
CUT AND THRUST FOR DEMOCRACY

Liberals and Labour campaigned as two separate parties in the May election – no discussion of coalition or even a shared agenda. In some places the sparks flew.

We were all misled. Since the election the two of them have cosied up, getting closer and closer, even though Tony Blair's majority is so big he has no conceivable need of Paddy's minions.

What's the plot? Most governments come to office with a big idea (even if it eventually becomes mere survival). Before the May election we were told Labour's was to make a difference, to make things better. We now know the real big idea was in the closet during the election. It turns out to be nothing less than refashioning the British constitution to remove confrontational politics for ever.

The Liberals have long held that the biggest defect of British politics is passion. They don't like argument. They see heated exchanges across the floor, sharp questioning, the cut and thrust of party politicking across the chamber of the House of Commons as problems. They have long sought round tables to replace that square table dividing two sides, preferring consensus to decision, compromise to principle.

Now we have a government which thinks the same way.

Labour has come out for PR but why does it want to change a system from which it has done so well? The Prime Minister has to let us into his thinking – especially since proportional representation was hardly a central feature of Labour's general election pitch. Is it that he thinks the 20th century was disfigured by too many Conservative administrations, some of which (like his government) were elected on a minority of the vote? His alliance with the Liberals is intended to find a way of counting votes that would prevent another Conservative majority in all but the biggest of landslide years. He is – we surmise – seeking the elixir of permanent power but fiddling with the system, rather than mastering the art of perpetual popularity.

He brings in sight the death of many of the salient characteristics of our democracy. Parliament is all the better for being angry, funny, spontaneous, personal, cutting, even un-

kind. It is a test of mettle and men, and of the persuasiveness of policy. If you can convince Parliament, in the teeth of strong opposition, then you have a good chance of convincing the nation.

Our system thrives on uncertainties. At no point during the 18 years of Conservative rule could we be sure we would win again. At no point – under present rules – can Mr Blair relax knowing he is guaranteed another term, whatever the current size of his majority. If you alter the voting system much of that uncertainty is removed.

Parliament would be insipid if we had to try to agree all the while. The nation would soon feel bored and cheated. Some say Prime Minister's Questions are too boisterous and noisy. Yet any constituent coming to Parliament wants tickets for precisely that confrontation between the big men, not for some worthy debate. Television does not want to follow politicians chanting accord in words so loose and empty they permit consent by all.

I read occasionally that Tony Blair is not keen on new voting systems. Sources say that he shares popular scepticism about PR. This is hard to believe. He is powerful; he heads the government. If he can single-handedly overturn a manifesto promise on tobacco sponsorship, it is hard to believe he would allow PR for Wales, Scotland and the European Parliament if he was against it.

We have to treat his enthusiasm for PR seriously. He has appointed Lord Jenkins, who is a staunch campaigner for the abolition of first-past-the-post elections. Lord Jenkins's "inquiry" is neither independent nor academic. Had the Prime Minister been genuinely undecided, he would have appointed a High Court judge or someone of no known view or affiliation in order to carry out an impartial review.

Labour delights in saying it embodies the new consensus as it pushes through devolution, PR, the introduction of the European Convention on Human Rights and so on.

But I have no wish to join Mr Blair's new consensus, if indeed it is one. It is our job, the job of William Hague and his team, to expose Lib-Lab policies when we think them secretive and wrong or muddled. (For example, in showing how Mr Blair told the nation only half the story when before the election he said he wanted a different relationship with Europe and devolved government in the regions.) The government of this country will be the better for that disclosure.

What he really meant – we can now see – was removing substantial responsibility from our government and accountability to our Parliament to "independent" quangos and secret meetings of the Council of Ministers.

His new model dispenses with Parliament and its role of demanding for their actions. PR is his magic ingredient: the project is nothing less than to abolish opposition. Lib-Lab success would make a mighty dent in our democracy.

Wanted: a Department for Banging Heads Together



POLLY TOYNBEE
NEW UNIT.
OLD PROBLEMS

Today Tony Blair launches his Social Exclusion Unit from a school in the heart of Lambeth. Expect an inspirational speech pledging himself again to the cause of the poor. Again he will ask his government to be judged by its success in bringing them back into the mainstream.

There's been a fair amount of cynicism about this enterprise. Is it just another talking shop, more policy wonkery? Just another fizzing initiative, that fizzles out before long? Yet another layer of bureaucracy? Where, muttered one Labour MP, does cutting the work incentives for very poor new single parents fit this grand scenario?

However, this is the key Big Idea. It is the rock on which all the other fine schemes and good intentions will stand or founder. Welfare to Work, New Deal, all of it depends for long-term success on this unit – because this is the Department for Banging Heads Together. Many have tried it, many have failed. (Some may remember something called Jasp – the Joint Approach to Social Policy?) But that doesn't mean it isn't worth trying again and again.

Headed by the Prime Minister, run from Downing Street under his authority, it brings together eight senior ministers. Its committee includes six senior civil servants and six experts from probation, social services, charities, church and police. Their role is to co-ordinate across the nightmarish boundaries that divide departmental budgets at the top and often destroy the good that happens on the ground.

The unit has no budget, deliberately. They considered whether to bid for funds and decided against it, fearing all their energy would be spent on setting up projects instead of making the nation's administration work – far more difficult, far less fun, far more important. The problem is not a shortage of wonderful schemes on the ground. There are plenty of social entrepreneurs and local authority-run schemes that work very well. The unit's task is to co-ordinate all that, replicate the best, ensure the money flows into what works and, most important of all, to make all these organisations work in long-term partnerships.

This is dull administrative stuff, not headline-grabbing new

wheezes. But consider what is happening on the ground right now, and you will have some idea of the problems they have to solve. Take just one problem which warping parts of the state are tackling in different ways – dysfunctional families with young children where everything goes wrong.

Jack Straw at the Home Office has his own Parenting Initiative. The NHS funds projects for mothers and children, being legally responsible for child protection and health visitors. The Education Department is struggling with impossible young children who arrive at school unfit to learn, and the rising tide of school exclusions. Police, courts and probation try to deal with very young criminals, catching a very few at huge expense, doing nothing about prevention. The Environment Department oversees local authorities and social services, responsible for rescuing families from the brink and for children in care. Meanwhile charities who run some of the best family projects dissipate their energy struggling to put together money from all these sources.

All these agencies approach the same family from a very different point of view, using different budgets with different objectives. It will be the Social Exclusion Unit's task to make them all work together – very difficult indeed. Partnership is the key word – making it happen is something else.

What's actually happening? Disaster and chaos all over the place.



An ounce of intervention in the lives of poor children now saves pounds later

Photograph: Andrew Buiman

Under the shadow of *The Independent's* offices in Canary Wharf, Tower Hamlets council, one of the basket-case local authorities, is slashing its budgets. Many others around the country are doing likewise. In a very harsh year for local authorities, social services almost everywhere are squeezed to the bone. Looking just at family projects, many are closing, others are being cut right back. Often the first to go are the best, run by charities.

Newpin, in Bethnal Green, is just one example. Although it has recently had a glowing evaluation report, exceeding its targets by 20 per cent this year, it is to close. Each year it takes in some 80 profoundly depressed mothers who are not coping with their children. gives them a befriender and offers intensive support. They teach mothers who have never been mothered themselves how to play and talk to their children, visiting them at home, bringing in the isolated and getting them on their feet. Most of the co-ordinators are mothers who have been through the programme and turn into befrienders of others, passive victims becoming active supporters.

However, suddenly, with no notice, the East London Health Authority, also in deep financial trouble, has withdrawn its £30,000 funding. As a result, Tower Hamlets council, looking for £6m cuts, is seizing the opportunity to withdraw its half of the money. No one wants to make the cuts – but it's not a statutory service so it's the

first to go. Newpin in Sheffield and Newham are under threat for the same reasons. Other children's charities running family centres dealing with the same problems are also closing. NCH Action for Children has lost its funding from Hammersmith and Fulham for its Askham Family Centre, and three others in Oxfordshire. I could list plenty more. Save the Children is now withdrawing its family centres, partly because local authorities were withdrawing money. Like all charities, it isn't willing to fund what local authorities themselves should do: its role is to offer added value. Partnerships everywhere are breaking down.

What can the Social Exclusion Unit do? Knock heads together. All these government departments have a strong interest in helping calamitous families at the earliest stage. If they don't, these families will cost social services, schools, police, prisons and the NHS a vast fortune in future years. How do you get money out of what isn't working, into what does? The trouble is, the Treasury can't count the future money saved. That's why it will take prime ministerial muscle to decree, say, that family centres that

are proven to work will be funded jointly out of all those budgets, by hook or by crook.

And family centres are just one example. In every other field it's the same story. The unit is starting work on school exclusions, street homelessness and the worst council estates. But whatever it labels the problem, it's always inextricably linked with everything else. Pull one thread and it all unravels.

The question is whether, for the first time ever, they can knit it all together? Has the Prime Minister the time to give it? Only his power can force it to work. Dare he take money from the police, courts and prisons – which don't work – to fund prevention where the future outcomes will never be easily quantifiable? Can it be done without bridging money? How do you seize control back from useless local authorities who deliver most of these services, while still talking devolution? Some sceptical old heads give it a slim chance, because clever people of left and right have identified this problem time and again, and failed to solve it. But that is why you need a new government and new clever people, to see if they can do any better this time.

Women, like men, can help acting on impulse



DAVID WALKER
BEHAVING BADLY IN BASILDON

"It's not like dealing with a hardened criminal," a member of the Essex Constabulary was reported as saying as news broke of the arrest of Denise Giddings over the abduction from a Basildon hospital of new-born Karl Hawthorne.

Well, no, it's not, especially since under English law suspects are still (just about) merely that and are not guilty – and hence to be considered criminal – until a court of law finds them so.

But we get the officer's point. This is one of those cases where even the hench's hard men have to admit "responsibility" is not a straightforward matter. Here is a tale of a simulated pregnancy, a cot and toys brought in advance. But by accepting the pathos, do we open the door to accepting there is such a thing as *crime passionnel* or, in its latter-day variants, hormonal or Darwinian crime – a class of offences in which the perpetrator can honestly plead, "it wasn't me, guv"?

Child abduction touches nerve-ends deep in the cultural cortex. This is the ultimate community crime, the one which defined Jewish sin (in Christian eyes) in the Middle Ages. History's stock of myth and folk tales is riddled with child stealing and substitution, from the banks of the Nile (Moses) to those of the Weser (eldest action by Hamelin's piper, touching the even deeper parental fear that children might actually want to leave).

Fear persists into the neon-lit late 20th century. Most of those who have waited in hospital corridors for

a birth have entertained horror fantasies about mis-identification and loss – it is only when your son starts to walk like his grandfather you have complete genetic confirmation.

This is why the Basildon story makes such good copy – which Karl's father, the unimaginative (at least in the names department) Karl Hawthorne promptly realised as he opened the sealed bids from the papers for his account of events. And of course behind it all may lie a phenomenon which is still pretty much a medical also-ran, miscarriage.

Despite the propagandising efforts of such specialists as Lesley Regan at St Mary's Hospital and a couple of indefatigable interest groups, the physiological causes of spontaneous abortion are little known, let alone its psychological dimension – why, for example, some women hate the association of that word, abortion, and its implication of choice, with the randomness and wastefulness of what has happened inside them.

Miscarriage's Cinderella status is odd since it is a mass phenomenon. A fifth of all putative pregnancies that go to term end prematurely: it is an accident famous actresses are unashamed to acknowledge. Yet women's reactions to miscarriage are richly diverse. For some, feelings of loss and bereavement are real; for others, it registers no more heavily than 100 other physical passages. In a small number of women, reaction does seem to take extreme forms. For a handful, it seems a wish to replace the

dead child is fulfilled by the theft of some other's living offspring.

But here we need to tread very carefully. Society – men, many women, too – is hopelessly confused in the way it models women's "nature". Sex machines one minute, breeding machines the next and in between corporate high-achievers all.

It is not just the facile generalisation that says "all women are ...", for example, Mandy Allwoods at heart. It is the anthropological arrogance that says there is an identifiable structure to women's behaviour. History is littered with examples of priests and politicians and paediatricians who believe they know what nature's programme is for women, and it generally involves a fair degree of standing around in nurseries and kitchens.

Perhaps it was the death of Diana, Princess of Wales. This autumn we seem to have heard a lot about a meteorological or tidal model of female nature: women are oceanic spaces through which course great waves ... of emotion, of chemicals, of connectivity. It is a model which feeds off the new irrationalism – that strain of post-modern thought, increasingly common at the century's end – that condemns the Enlightenment and all its work, especially reason.

Women – opines Steven Pinker, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the latest neo-Darwinian to hit the bookshelves – know not what they do. They are culturally programmed – for example, sometimes to leave their own new-born children

to die. Such women are not mad or bad. They are obeying "unconscious" primitive instincts: only as children age do mothers recognise the increasing "biological value" of a child.

Women – conventional wisdom was busy with this interpretation yesterday – sometimes cannot help acting as they do because Nature/their genes/hormones/maternal destiny requires them to do things.

The obvious response to all this is that if genes determine women's behaviour why do they not equally cause men to behave as they do. And down that road lies the excuse Martin Clunes and his ilk are just longing for: it is a recipe for barbarism. Of course behaviour is shaped and limited by physiology and genetic endowment and of course there are gender differences in both. But to leap from there to causation and start saying women and men have no choice is to toboggan down a philosophical Cresta Run.

We have to hope Denise Giddings gets a fair trial. That must mean one in which it is recognised that all our lives are a series of balances and compromises between biology, will and culture. But the greatest of the three has to be will, the capacity to choose.

A woman who miscarries may suffer badly. She may need and deserve a lot more support than she may get from partner or family and especially from GPs whose training in dealing with women is still so inadequate. None the less the fact of her pain and loss can never be allowed to deny she had a choice in how she then behaved.

THE INDEPENDENT

Clueless this Christmas?

HELP IS AT HAND

Read our Christmas Gift Guide on Friday 12 December to help you decide what you'll be giving this Christmas.

PUBLISHED IN THE EYE ON FRIDAY 12 DECEMBER

IN ASSOCIATION WITH





Runners up in The Independent/Clothes Show Live Young Catwalk Photographer of the Year, Paul Gadd, left, and Christine Coombes, right, are both from the Swansea Institute of Higher Education. Paul Gadd's shot sums up perfectly the mix of fashion, glamour and beefcake that combine to make the crowd scream. Christine Coombes chose to pick out the texture of fluffy fake fur hats by Herald and Heart Hatters. Her shot was recommended for its artful composition



'Don't shoot till you see the whites of their eyes'

As Clothes Show Live opened its doors on Friday, five young finalists for The Independent's young catwalk photographer of the year competition flexed their lenses. Tamsin Blanchard helped choose a winner.

"Lights. Music. Three minutes to go. Testing, testing. Five, four, three, two, one. Action. Welcome to Clothes Show Live 1997." It is 11.15 on Friday morning and five young photographers are about to make their catwalk debut. The finalists for The Independent/Clothes Show Live young catwalk photographer of the year are elbowing their way into the fray around the catwalk for the first show of the week. They are nervous. A representative from Fuji has supplied each of them with the long lens necessary for professional catwalk photography. Chris Moore, the veteran catwalk photographer and competition judge who has been snapping shows since the Sixties, offers some last-minute advice. "Don't shoot till you see the whites of their eyes," he says.

The music, dance and fashion extravaganza explodes into action with so much dry ice billowing onto the catwalk the photographers can barely see the ends of their lenses. They have 45 minutes to shoot five rolls of film and produce three strong images that would make an Independent reader stop and look as they turn the page.

This is like no other fashion

show. Instead of rows of stony-faced fashion editors dressed in serious black, jotting down notes and sketches in their Smythson fashion diaries, the Fashion Theatre at Birmingham's NEC has the atmosphere of a pop concert. The audience screams, whoops and gasps at the clothes, a mixture of high street and high fashion, and the models. The aim of all Clothes Show Live fashion shows appears to be to get the male models down to their underwear so the decibel levels from the screaming teenagers (and their mums) reach ear-drum perforation point.

After the show, the film goes



off to be processed and the finalists go for a wander around the hundreds of stands. Ted Baker's stand is mobbed all day by shoppers waiting 40 minutes for a knock-down £10 T-shirt or a rumble through the piles of shirts, ties, jumpers and trousers.

Antoni Burakowski, of the funsome T-shirt duo Antoni & Alison, loves the energy and party atmosphere of Clothes Show Live. "The kids save up for months before they come to the show," he says. Other names among the 400 showing at the exhibition include Betty Jackson, Que Sera - where you can buy the latest in toe rings, of all things - Dolly Dangers, a favourite for

hair accessories, Fat Face, for polar fleeces, and Mambo, for surfwear. British designers Pearce Fionda are attending the show for the first time and shoppers can have their posters autographed by the designers themselves. Round the corner, Ben de Lisi is autographing carrier bags containing his bargain-priced eveningwear.

Waiting for their films to be processed, the five finalists are too preoccupied to shop. At 5pm, the prints are ready to be edited. Paul Gadd, 28, and Christine Coombes, 22, are both from the photography degree course at Swansea Institute of Higher Education; David Vintiner, 21, is in his final year of a photography degree at Blackpool; Laura Woolnough, 25, studied a BTEC in photography at London College of Printing and now works on the picture desk at the Press Association; James Moriarty, 20, is at Reading School of Art & Design in his final year of an HND in photography.

Clothes Show Live presenter Caryn Franklin joins the judge's huddle and we decide unanimously on the winner - James - and the two runners-up, Paul and Christine. For his shot that catches the movement and atmosphere of the show as well as the clothes, James wins a Fuji GA645AF Autofocus camera worth £995 and will have the chance to follow in Chris Moore's footsteps when he assists the Independent's catwalk photographer next spring at London Fashion Week. The two runners up received £200 worth of Fuji film.

Clothes Show Live 1997 is at Birmingham's NEC until 10 December. Call 0121-767 4444.

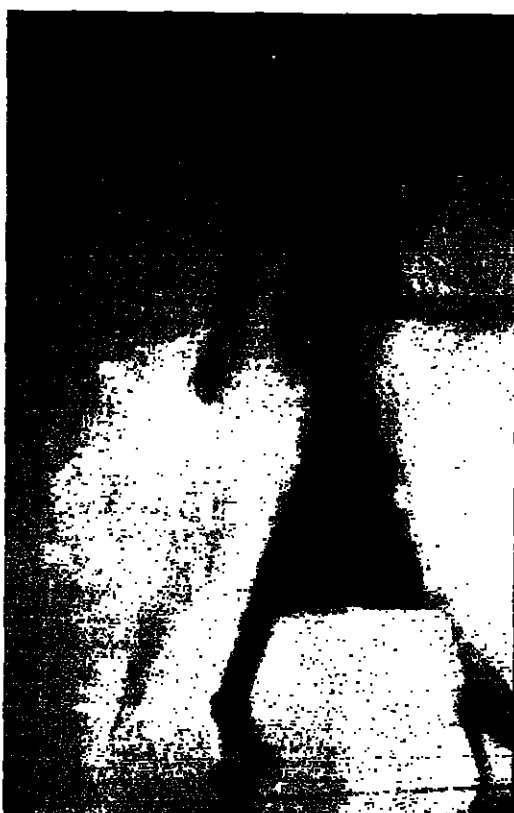


Young Catwalk Photographer of the Year, James Moriarty's photograph, above, has it all - the movement, the showbiz pizzazz, the clothes, and the party atmosphere too

LONGINES
L'ELEGANCE DU TEMPS DEPUIS 1832

Sport Wing FOR LADIES & GENTS. WATER RESISTANT TO 100 METRES

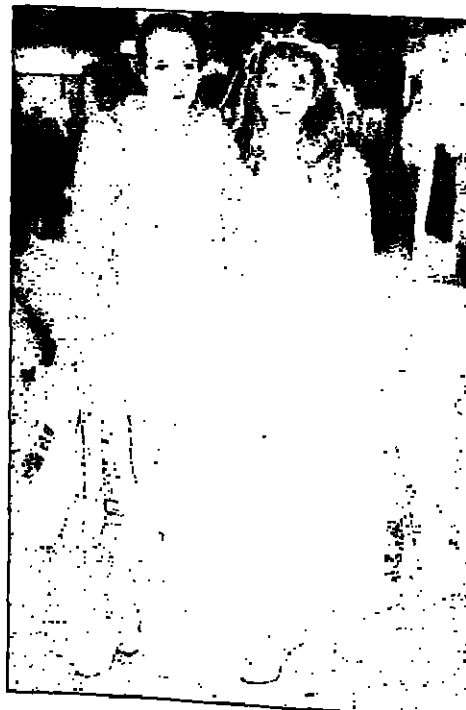
LONGINES WATCHES ARE AVAILABLE FROM LEADING RETAIL JEWELLERS. FOR A CATALOGUE PLEASE TELEPHONE 0161 624 3977



Shots of style from the two finalists, Laura Woolnough, above left, capturing stretch denim in action, and David Vintiner, left, who chose to concentrate on the atmosphere of the show rather than the clothes

FASHION MOMENT

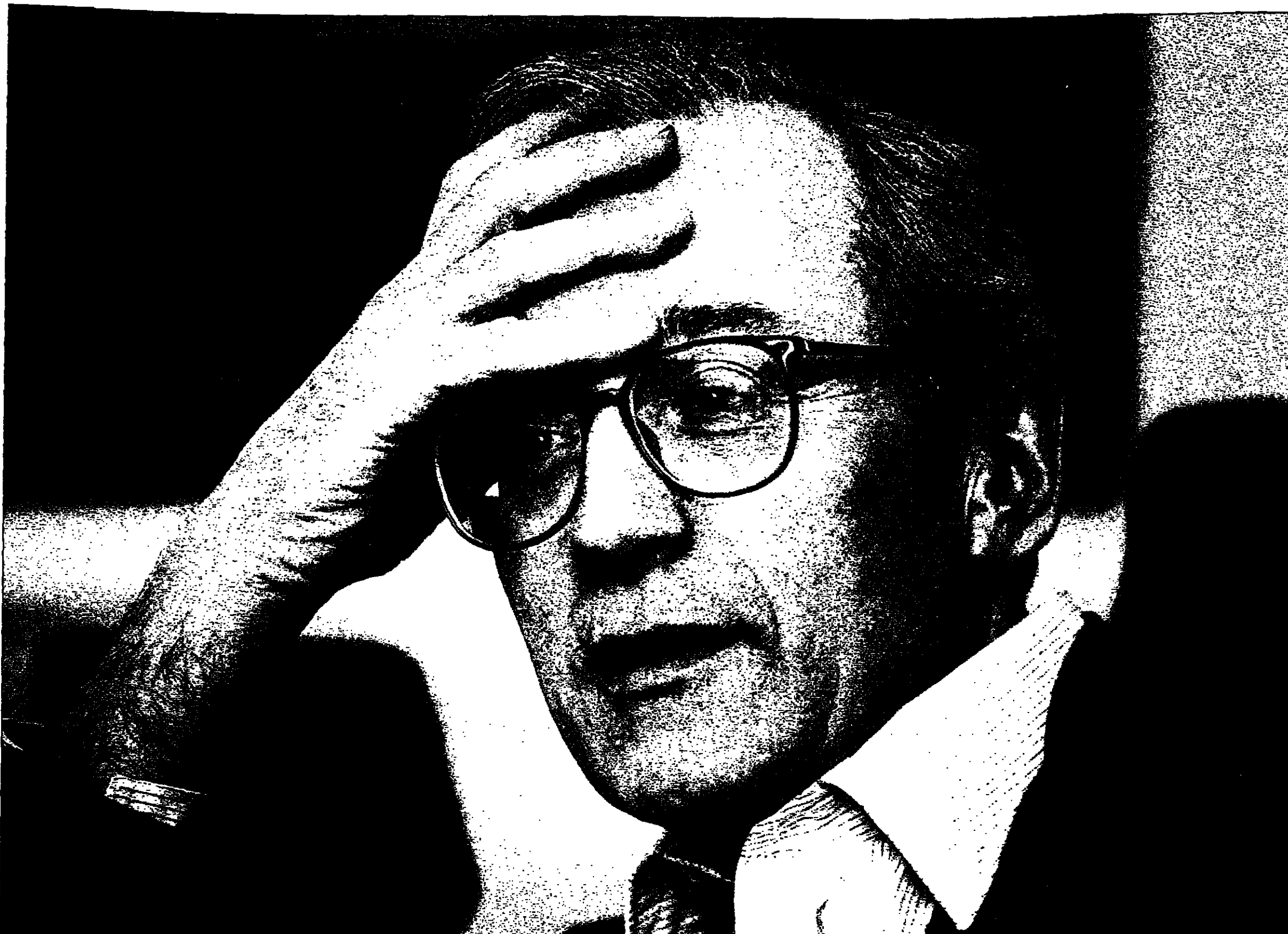
Spotted shopping at the Clothes Show Live on Friday were these two young walking, talking Barbie dolls - Sam, 15, and Hannah, 14. They don't usually dress like this, but they made a special effort for a day out at the annual fashion extravaganza. "My mum made both the skirts out of pink fun fur," says Sam, "and we had an embarrassing time in Woolworth's buying the Barbie vests and bags." Their entire outfits cost about £10 each. "We didn't want to come in boring everyday clothes," says Sam. "This is the only place you can come dressed like this and nobody would look twice."



Tamsin Blanchard

15/INTERVIEW

Lord, what a nightmare at the opera



Lord Chadlington, multi-millionaire PR whiz, who resigned last week as Royal Opera House chairman after Gerald Kaufman's scathing report

Photograph: Glynn Griffiths

Lord Chadlington - aka Peter Gummer, younger brother of John - is talking about opera, about which he is passionate, of course. He says that if he could have a one-to-one with anybody it would be with Wagner, "so I could ask him some questions about the Ring cycle, and better understand it".

If he gets through, I say, could he also ask him if he's thinking of doing another series of *Hart to Hart* with Stefanie Powers? It was jolly good and is much-missed. Oddly, Lord Chadlington looks at me like I'm totally bonkers. That's the thing about opera buffs, they don't watch any old rubbish on the telly like the rest of us. Some might even say they're a bit estranged from the real world, which is why they're in the trouble they're in.

Last week, Lord Chadlington, the multi-millionaire PR whiz who founded Shandwick PR, now the largest PR company in the world, was forced to resign as chairman of the Royal Opera House after one of the most savage reports on a national arts body ever.

No, the report did not, as it happens, take him by surprise. "If I was an outsider looking in, I would think this organisation smells bad. It does look like a group of friends running it for their own self-indulgence."

Which it is, isn't it? "No! There are 58 people - clever business people - who work there for free, but are never acknowledged." But if you're all so clever and financially astute, how come the house is in such a mess? Because, possibly, you treat it as a kind of extension of the Garrick Club, only with singing and dancing? "No. It's because it is underfunded," he claims. Oh come on, I say.

The report by the all-party committee - chaired by Gerald Kaufman - said that although the ROH had received £98m of taxpayer's money over the past five years, plus £78m of lottery cash, it was guilty of "incompetence, disastrous financial planning and misjudgement". The debts currently amount to £7m. The failure to secure a permanent home while Covent Garden was being rebuilt was the result of "abysmal management". The chairman should go. The chief executive (Mary Allen) should go. The board should go. Sack the lot of them, Kaufman effective-

DEBORAH ROSS
TALKS TO LORD CHADLINGTON

ly said. "They need a good boot up the arse," concluded *The Sun*.

Lord Chadlington describes the report as "outrageous" and "scandalous". The trouble, he sighs, is that "we all care too much about the quality of the productions we put on". But, still, you resigned? "It seemed, in the circumstances, the only honourable thing to do. Lord Carrington, who is something of a hero of mine, resigned over the Falklands crisis even though it wasn't his fault. Someone had to accept responsibility, so he did. I am accepting responsibility in this instance." So you don't consider yourself personally to blame in any way? "I actually saved the house from going bust! Twice! Which is no small thing!" Lord Chadlington, clearly, is not about to fall on his sword.

Has he, I wonder, spoken to John about it? "Very sweetly, he phoned me this morning from Kyoto where he is at an environmental conference." And? "He said: 'Why, Peter, why?' To which you replied: 'Because, John, I don't want to sit on the fence until pushed. I would prefer to get off by myself.'"

I tell Lord Chadlington it's a good job he didn't go into politics because in politics you have to hang on in there until the

last possible minute. It's almost *de rigueur*. Look at Piers Merchant, who kept sticking his head out from under the duvet and saying: "It's not what it seems. Vote for me!"

Lord Chadlington - who has advised the Tories on the presentation of controversial policy areas such as the Gulf War - accepts I may have a point. "I spent 18 years supporting the Tory government and when I look back the one thing they did wrong was not accepting responsibility when things went wrong." Does he admire New Labour? "I do think they are doing the right things, yes." Would he say he was more Labour than Tory now? "I tend to go for people more than policies. I admired Thatcher enormously. I admired John Major enormously. He was a man of great principle and great courage. I don't know anyone in the Labour party very well."

We meet at the headquarters of Shandwick in Mayfair. His office, with its big, fat *Helio* style sofas and twinkling chandeliers is very cosy. Lord Chadlington opens a very good bottle of chablis, then asks: "How long are you going to want me for?" I am so snuggled in, there'll probably be no getting rid of me. I imagine that is how the board at the Opera House felt up until last week.

No, Lord Chadlington won't have a drink himself. He gave up alcohol 14 years ago after a bout of hepatitis. His doctor told him not to drink for a year, so he didn't, then when he could he found he didn't want to any more. "I didn't get hangovers. I didn't get jet lag. I felt better." This is a great shame because the wine is lovely.

Peter Gummer is much better looking than John, which isn't saying much. I know, but it's still better than not being better looking than John, which would be very distressing, I imagine. He is wearing a Val Doonican-style red cardie but is still quite dandy and dapper, with a sort of John Lennon look about his features and a high-pitched, rather girly laugh. If you were to meet him at a cocktail party, you'd assume he was a bachelor.

He's not, though. On the contrary, he is a great family man. There are photographs of his four children - Naomi, Chloe, Eleanor and James, who range in age from 7 to 14 - everywhere. He actually always wanted six children but his wife, Lucy, put her foot down. He was 40 and, yes, very much established as a bachelor

("with a nice little flat in Knightsbridge") when he first met Lucy 15 years ago. She, then 25, turned up at Shandwick for a job interview. "And the moment she walked in I thought oh-oh, I can't have her working here." Why? Because you fancied her from the off? "Yes, I guess so." He arranged for a friend to employ her, then phoned her up to ask her out for dinner. They were engaged within five days of meeting. How romantic, I say. "I think I was looking to get settled down," he says. Would he describe himself as a passionate man? "I am affectionate and demonstrative. If that's what you mean," he replies. Do you ever cry. Yes, he says, opera makes him cry.

The Gummer boys - John, Peter and their younger brother, Mark - did not start out as grand or lordly. Their father, Canon Selwyn Gummer, an Anglican vicar, was an autodidact from a Welsh coalmining background. Their mother, Sybille, was the daughter of a railway worker. Sybille was always very ambitious for her sons. If there was homework to be done, they did it be-

cause it was Selwyn's job to stack up the Pulpit Monthlies into piles of 50, John's job to put them in envelopes, Peter's job to seal them, Mark's to put the stamp on and Sybille's to address the envelopes with her "addressograph machine". Their reward would be one Quality Street each after every 100 completed. Peter's favourite was "the one in the shape of a stick". The chocolate-covered toffee? In the yellow wrapper? "Yes, Yes! Whereas mother always liked the purple ones. What are the purple ones?" Brazil nuts. I don't know much about opera, I tell him, but you can't fault me when it comes to Quality Street.

Anyway, the Pulpit Monthly "paid for our educations", by which Peter means it paid for his education. John (who, of course, went on to become a Tory MP and Cabinet minister) and Mark (who now runs a successful manufacturing business) both won scholarships to King's School, Rochester, whereas Peter had to be paid for. He says he's always been the thicko of the family. John is "exceptionally intel-

lectual" while Mark "is just brilliant". He never felt inadequate, though, "because I was better at football than both of them".

He went into PR, he later says, "because I just wasn't clever enough to do anything else". Oh come on, I say, you don't go on to build a company like Shandwick - which has 89 offices worldwide and employs 2,500 people and represents everyone from British Gas to Joan Collins - by being a total dimwit. "Perhaps," he suggests, "it just says something about the industry." Or, alternatively, "being stupid can be an advantage, because you know that to get anywhere you are going to have to work very hard. A lot of the very brilliant people I was at school with have disappeared from sight."

Peter went to Selwyn College, Cambridge, where he initially studied theology, having planned to become a priest. But at the end of the first year he decided he

didn't really have a vocation. "I started reading Kierkegaard, Sartre and Camus and my view of things changed. I realised the world was a much more difficult and complex place." He switched to a philosophy and psychology degree. No, his father was not upset. "He only ever wanted us to do what we ourselves wanted to do."

Peter isn't nearly as religious as John, who recently converted to Catholicism. "No, it wasn't a surprise. He is a very saintly and devout man." But, still, he believes in God, yes. No, incidents like Dunblane do not shake his belief. "Let's put it this way," he says. "When you listen to Bach, or smell your children's hair, how can you not believe in God?" Peter might not be an intellectual, but he is extremely cunning. I think. Certainly, God couldn't hope for a better PR spokesman.

Anyway, he was only appointed chairman of the Royal Opera House in September 1996, so he did inherit a lot of the problems, yes. The previous chairman and general director, Sir Angus Stirling and Jeremy Isaacs, should have ensured a permanent venue would be available during the closure. But, still, Lord Chadlington was specifically chartered for not revising the plans, or appointing a financial director for a year. His failure to act, said Kaufman, "ensured a fragile financial position became acute". The Opera House could not even supply any regular accounts or cost flow sheets. "There were some inadequacies in that regard, yes." The rest of the board have also resigned, but will be staying on in caretaker roles. There was no other way, he says. "There had to be an Aegean-style clear-out so that we could give the Arts Council and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport the opportunity to start again, and shed the past."

Anyway, he has to shed me, now, because he's due to go back to Oxfordshire, where he lives. He may no longer be chairman of the Royal Opera House, but that's OK. "One has to ultimately do what is best for the organisation you are serving." As he steps into the chauffeur-driven Bentley gently purring outside, Lord Chadlington is, I think, feeling more heroic than chastened. He seems elated, almost. He has done a Lord Carrington. He's taken a disaster and turned it into a personal triumph. Good PR, or what?

'I don't want to sit on the fence until pushed. I would rather get off by myself'

lore anything else, and did it well. Academic achievement was important, as was success. Her view seemed to be "you are put on this earth for a purpose and you will jolly well go about fulfilling that purpose".

Certainly, the Gummer family were an industrious and aspirational lot. To supplement his income, Selwyn struck on the idea of writing other vicars' sermons for them for £1 a go. "He started in 1950 and by the time he had finished had about 3,000 vicars on his list." Did each vicar get the same sermon each month? "Yes." So come Easter Sunday, say, there would be 3,000 vicars giving exactly the same sermon? "Yes. And I remember once going to Broadstairs on holiday, and going to the church there, and nudging my father and saying 'this is one of yours, dad.'"

All the family participated in getting out the Pulpit Monthly, as it was called. Come Saturday night, they would gather around

you don't fill their heads up with times tables and spellings...". But it was the refreshments that had fallen short of his expectations. There were no crisps.

Not that the evening did much for me either. I remain a firm fan of Mompurgo, but anecdotes of his childhood - ritual humiliation at boarding school, a father who walked out on him as a baby - confirmed what I have long suspected. A happy childhood is a useless

grounding for a creative adulthood: most of the best children's writers had early lives which were scarred by the loss of a parent and marked by constant uprooting. The closest my children have ever come to misery is being denied a Nintendo. Am wondering if we should divorce for the sake of their creative development. Otherwise risk raising a clutch of bank managers.

And now they won't even be

able to look back with loathing at the memory of codal stew (am convinced it was the childhood trauma of neck of lamb with pearl barley that came between me and accountancy). There was a wonderful back-of-the-bike-sheds camaraderie around the beef counter at Waitrose last week: felt a definite French Resistance style frisson between me and the man who was rooting around for bones among the packets of chuck steak. But actually it was news to me that ox-tail came from a cow - I thought that it belonged to the ox. It had always seemed to me slightly immoral that we killed a creature simply for its tail and kidneys, but to be honest I had never stopped to wonder why you didn't ever see fields of oxen. This double shock - the non-existence of oxen, and the non-availability of their tails - maybe just what I needed to kick-start me in to writing that novel.

A happy childhood is a useless grounding for a creative adulthood

For various logistical reasons I had to take my 11-year-old with me to a lecture by the children's author Michael Mompurgo. I had hoped it might prove a formative intellectual experience for him, particularly after we'd cleared up the misconception that a lecture meant Mr Mompurgo was going to tell us off. Also I must confess that I thought it might be valuable ammunition in the parental competition stakes at Christmas:

the Posh Cousins are bound to be hooked up for Stravinsky workshops. Ultimately, though, I don't think he was impressed. "I was a bit disappointed," he reflected on the way home. "In what way, darling?" I prompted, hoping for a sort of junior Bragg-esque critical analysis of the evening that I could repeat verbatim to my brother-in-law ("well, of course, this is the sort of intellectual audacity that you get from the state-system if

you don't fill their heads up with times tables and spellings..."). But it was the refreshments that had fallen short of his expectations. There were no crisps.

Not that the evening did much for me either. I remain a firm fan of Mompurgo, but anecdotes of his childhood - ritual humiliation at boarding school, a father who walked out on him as a baby - confirmed what I have long suspected. A happy childhood is a useless

DINAH HALL

16/OBITUARIES

Lord Dainton

Frederick Sydney Dainton, chemist, born Sheffield 11 November 1914; University Demonstrator in Chemistry Cambridge University 1944-46, H.O. Jones Lecturer in Physical Chemistry 1946-50; Fellow, St Catharine's College, Cambridge 1945-50; Professor of Physical Chemistry, Leeds University 1950-65; FRSE 1957; Chairman, Association for Radiation Research 1964-66; Vice-Chancellor, Nottingham University 1965-70; President, Faraday Society 1965-67; Chairman, Advisory Committee on Scientific and Technical Information 1966-70; Chairman, National Libraries Board 1968-69; Chairman, Council for Scientific Policy 1969-72; Dr Lee's Professor of Chemistry, Oxford University 1970-73; Kt 1971; Chairman, Advisory Board for Research Councils 1972-73; President, Chemical Society 1972-73; Chairman, University Grants Committee 1973-78; Chairman, British Library Board 1973-85; Chairman, National Radiological Protection Board 1973-85; Chancellor, Sheffield University 1978-97; President, Society of Designer Craftsmen 1985-97; created 1986 Baron Dainton; President, Arthritis and Rheumatism Council for Research 1988-97; married 1942 Barbara Wright (one son, two daughters); died Oxford 5 December 1997.

Among Fred Dainton's many contributions to public life was his chairmanship of the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology Information from 1966 to 1970, and his chairmanship of the committee leading to the *Enquiry into the Flow of Candidates in Science and Technology into Higher Education* presented to the then Secretary of State, Patrick Gordon-Walker, in January 1963. This was one of the most important and acted-upon reports of the decade, partly because it was so well and concisely written. Dainton argued that there should be a broad span of studies in the sixth forms of schools and that in consequence irreversible decisions for or against science, engineering and technology should be postponed as late as possible. The son of an illiterate father who none the less passionately believed in education, Dainton held it sacrosanct that the avenue to

educational success should be kept open.

He recommended that all pupils should study mathematics until they left school and that the teaching of mathematics should concern itself not only with training for discipline of thought and for logical reasoning, but also to show the effect of associated mathematical thinking with one or more of the experimental or engineering sciences, or with economics or other studies. This was a new concept in the late 1960s.

He underlined the urgent need to infuse breadth, humanity and up-to-dateness in the science curriculum and its teaching; that schools and local education authorities should take steps to ensure that the majority of pupils in secondary education should come into early contact with up-to-the-moment, relevant and attractive teaching of science within a five-year period; and that there should be provision on a co-operative basis, between schools if necessary, of high-quality introductory courses of the highest quality in science and mathematics for younger pupils.

He thought that universities should consider a further range of courses designed to attract into science and engineering able students who were not committed to these fields of study, but who were otherwise qualified to benefit from "ad initio" courses in them at university level. All this may sound no great shakes in 1997. It was pretty brand new in 1967 and there are two generations of students who owe more than they know to Fred Dainton.

In April 1965, I was asked by Nottingham University Labour Club to speak on the Wilson government's science policy. Speech and questions went swimmingly. Then a man with a quizzical expression and modest demeanour rose slowly at the back of the meeting - and proceeded to put the half-dozen most awkward and penetrating questions that could be put. Hugely disconcerted and metaphorically perspiring I sat down and frantically whispered to Mrs Cattermole, the chairman for the evening, "Who in heaven's name was that?" "Our new Vice-Chancellor," she smirked, "and his name is Fred Dainton, and he's charming, and he's devastating."

The first time I ever heard Dainton's name had been when canvassing in the Roxburgh, Selkirk and Peebles constituency in 1958. I was invited into the home of C.T.R. Wilson, him of the Cloud Chamber (the great experiment enabling atomic particles to be traced), who asked that if ever I became a Member of Parliament I should take advice from a pupil of his at Sidney Sussex, called Fred Dainton.

This I did for a third of a century. I saw Dainton at parliamentary and scientific committee meetings in Westminster Hall. I saw him at the Foundation for Science and Technology meetings in the beautiful rooms of the Royal Society; and throughout he continued to be the most articulate - and, yes, charming and devastating - devil's advocate. I have never



Fred Dainton: 'charming and devastating' - and an articulate devil's advocate

seen anyone put a point of view so forcefully torpedoing what others have said and yet being constructive and giving a minimum of personal offence. As a friend he was a politician's dream. Phone him and he would give you, regardless of your party label, a practical opinion based on distilled knowledge. On some occasions he would say "I am not as well-informed as I ought to be - I will find out from my friend Professor so-and-so", and he did just that, punctiliously and quickly.

Dainton was born in 1914, in Sheffield. His father was a craftsman mason, himself born in 1857. 13 years before compulsory education was introduced, and who therefore could be excused from being unable

to read or write. However George Dainton had insisted on his own children's reading to him much of what was best in English literature. Fred told me that as a seven-year-old he had started reading to his then 65-year-old father and that this gave him a facility and confidence in language for coherent expression that was to be valuable throughout his life.

He won a scholarship to St John's College, Oxford, where he was remembered for swimming at Parson's Pleasure each morning of term at 7.45am. This was probably the only time in his life when his behaviour might have been thought to have been "mad", for actually he was the most rational of men. At school he had chanced to

read *The Kinetics of Chemical Change in Gaseous Systems*, an advanced work which might have stretched an honourable chemistry graduate. Dainton's exceptional mind was fascinated by both the contents and the style of the book. The author, Sir Cyril Hinshelwood, was Professor of Physical Chemistry at Oxford and this tempted Dainton to try for a university place from a school which had never before sent an undergraduate to Oxford.

He was greatly fortunate in that the tutor at St John's was Dr H.W. (later Sir "Tommy") Thompson. It was Thompson who initiated Dainton into studies of chemical reaction rates, a topic as wide as chemistry itself. In this field for over 30 years and later with groups of research students, many of whom became eminent in their own right. Dainton published some 200 research papers characterised by unusual thoroughness and depth of analysis. Years later, as Chancellor of Sheffield University, he was to say: "The thing I treasure most of all is the regard of my former students, who invite me to visit them all over the world."

In elementary gas reactions Dainton struggled with the intricacies of chain reactions, on which he wrote monographs, and with the complications arising from photochemical activation, both features encountered in many studies of anionic polymerisation. When, in 1965, I visited Chalk River in Canada, Professor W.B. Lewis asked after Dainton. This was a natural question because from 1945 he had studied the chemical effects of radiation at Chalk River and made important contributions to a field of great biological, including medical, significance. Physiological changes occur in an aqueous milieu where all radiation harder than the ultraviolet produces electrons and other ionised particles. Dainton was one of the pioneers of the aqueous electron, extensively exploring its chemical aspects. Even to the chemical kineticist this was a topic of disheartening complexity with some of its initial stages occurring in less than a billionth of a second.

Dainton more than most chemists was interested in the medical effects of his work. As he told the House of Lords on 25 February 1997:

For well over 40 years I have had a deep personal and professional interest in research in clinical medicine

carried out by staff of university medical schools and institutes. For various periods in my life - for example, as chairman for the Advisory Board for Research Councils and its predecessor, the Council for Scientific Policy, and subsequently chairman of the University Grants Committee - I was responsible for the allocation of public funds to be used for that purpose.

Dainton told the Lords that he had learnt many lessons - first and foremost was that the quality of future patient treatment rested upon the quality and extent of medical education and research today, which in turn were increasingly and critically dependent upon basic scientific research. That was why he had always advocated close collaboration between high-quality departments of biological and physical sciences with medical schools and institutes. No man in post-war Britain did more to bring this about.

His colleagues in chemistry recognised his distinction. He became President of the Faraday Society and of the Royal Chemical Society, who bestowed on him its greatest honour, the Faraday Lectureship. Cornell appointed him to the prestigious George Baker Lectureship. For 40 years he was a Fellow of the Royal Society and in 1969 he was given the Davy Medal. In 1937, he left for Cambridge to study reaction kinetics under the Nobel prizewinner R.G.W. Norrish. It was one of Dainton's gifts that he could handle difficult and brilliant scientists, and he got on well with Norrish. Supported by awards from the Goldsmiths' Company, he joined Sidney Sussex College.

At the age of 36 Dainton became Professor of Physical Chemistry at Leeds. There, at Cookridge, he directed research at a special radiological unit before becoming Vice-Chancellor of Nottingham in 1965, which took him into the stratosphere of the British academic establishment, of which he was to be a central figure for four decades. He told me at a meeting at the Foundation for Science and Technology over the dinner table that the only reason he had gone to Nottingham was so that he could establish a medical school at the university. He was not exaggerating.

The years 1965-70 were ones of student turbulence, and unlike the formidable Michael Swann in Edinburgh and many other distinguished Vice-Chancellors Dainton was adept at dealing deftly with militant students. I heard the story that he had on

one fraught occasion quoted from Mao's *Little Red Book*: "You should respect your teachers; they know more than you do." Dainton assured me that this was not apocryphal but true.

From Nottingham he was tempted back to Oxford to succeed Hinshelwood, the inspirer of his earlier attachment to reaction kinetics, as Dr Lee's Professor of Chemistry. Although the Dr Lee's chair had notable prestige - Hinshelwood's sole predecessor had been Frederick Soddy, also a Nobel Laureate - it did not offer the range or quality of influence which Dainton, by now Sir Frederick, was able to exert. Lord Porter of Luddenhams, who shared a laboratory with Dainton "when we were both young" at Cambridge, remembers his commenting that "being professor at Oxford was a position of considerable influence and little power. Fred," says Porter, "liked power."

After three years, in 1973, he became Chairman of the University Grants Committee. The UGC was the long-established intermediary between the Treasury and the UK universities, and the body which distributed government funding to the individual institutes - then already numbering 33. In this key position he had much contact with government circles, including with one Minister for Education, Margaret Thatcher, herself an Oxford chemistry graduate.

Porter remembers Dainton as a good tennis partner at Cambridge; the same qualities of nimbleness and dexterity, which stood him in good stead in his laboratory, were related to a lifelong admiration for craftsmanship, in which his illiterate father had excelled.

Of his multitude of interests one other must be mentioned: he was Chairman of the British Library Board from 1978 to 1985. It was under his guidance that the assessment was made which resulted in the British Museum Library's being transformed into the British Library and taking into account the impact of electronic technologies. After becoming a life peer in 1986, Dainton established himself in Parliament, where he was immensely popular amongst all parties. He was married to Barbara Wright, herself a research zoologist of distinction, who with a son and two daughters survives him.

— Tam Dalyell

Billy Bremner

Billy Bremner, football player and manager; born Stirling 9 December 1942; played for Leeds United 1958-76, Scotland 1965-75 (54 caps), Hull City 1976-78; manager, Doncaster Rovers 1978-85, Leeds United 1985-88, Doncaster Rovers 1989-91; died Doncaster 7 December 1997.

Billy Bremner was one of Britain's most fiery, skilful and industrious footballers of the post-war years. An essential cog in the pragmatic, often over-robust yet frequently wonderfully entertaining Leeds United team of the Sixties and Seventies, he was also the red-haired dynamo in Scotland's international side, winning 54 caps.

He was only 5ft 5in tall yet his stature, at a time when football was more physical than it is today, allowed him to become not only the inspiration and captain of the championship, FA Cup and League Cup winning Leeds side that Don Revie produced, but also the driving force in the 1974 Scottish World Cup side that was among the best that country has raised.

Leeds saw his footballing potential when he was a schoolboy in his home-town of Stirling, where he played for Gowanhill

Juniors. He was only 17 when he made the first of his 585 appearances over 16 years for Leeds. When he arrived at Elland Road Revie was himself still on the playing staff and took him under his wing. At first Bremner seemed a natural inside right but over the years he developed into one of the toughest and most constructive goalscoring half-backs in the country. With Johnny Giles and Bremner, Leeds had a magnificent midfield.

As with many players of his time, he mixed a hard, enthusiastic attitude to the game with an almost equally dedicated approach to enjoying the pleasures that comparative riches brought, yet he remained astonishingly fit into his mid-thirties.

As an international, he won his first cap in 1965, not long before England won the 1966 World Cup. He took enormous pleasure in playing his part in beating the world champions at Wembley the following year.

After several disappointments, Leeds finally won a European competition (the Fairs' Cup) in 1968, which was also the year Bremner guided them to League Cup success. The following season he won an elusive championship medal. By then Revie's team had the reputation for being cynical and over-

professional. It was a criticism that too often ignored the skills of Bremner and his colleagues and cost them a lot of sympathy when further major honours slipped from their grasp - until they won the championship again in 1974, beating a fine Liverpool side by five points.

In the World Cup of that year in Germany Scotland were Britain's only representatives and Bremner, then 32, had to deal with a lot of behind-the-scenes arguing over payments. He disliked the responsibility and after bad-tempered exchanges with the Scottish officials there was even a threat that he and the controversial winger Jimmy Johnstone would be sent home. He not only stayed but led the Scots to a draw with Brazil. Scotland were unfortunately eliminated without losing a match and Pele was full of praise for Bremner, who nevertheless began the following season with an incident that put a shadow over his career.

In the Charity Shield at Wembley he and Liverpool's Kevin Keegan were centre-stage in a foul-laden match seen on television. They exchanged punches and, rightly, were sent off. Had that been an end to the matter it would not have been so bad but both petulantly threw away their

shirts. A spectator tried to have both players charged with breach of the peace. No civil action was taken but both missed 11 matches through the ensuing suspension.

Bremner's international career ended in unfortunate circumstances in 1975, when he and four other internationals were banned for life from playing for Scotland after being accused of unruly behaviour at a Copenhagen night-club and in the team's hotel. Bremner denied the allegations but Leeds too warned him about his future conduct. His illustrious career at the club ended a year later when he moved on to captain Hull City.

In the early Eighties he led Doncaster Rovers out of the fourth division, then returned to Leeds in 1985, where he had three years as manager before again returning to Doncaster.

Charlie Nicholas, a contemporary player, accurately embraced Bremner's contribution to football by saying: "His determination and love of the game made him such a difficult opponent. He could tackle, score goals and spray passes all over. That Leeds team would play 30 or 40 passes without an opponent touching the ball. Billy Bremner was some player."

— Norman Fox



'Some player': Bremner borne aloft by Leeds on their winning the League Cup in 1968

Photograph: Allsport

DEATHS

BURROWS: Dr Norman Elliott, peacefully in hospital on 2 December, aged 83. Funeral Wednesday 10 December 2.30pm, St Maribone Parish Church, Maribone Rd, London W1, and afterwards at the Medical Society of London. Donations to charities in lieu of flowers to J.H. Kempson, 9 Pond Street, NW5.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (Births, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding anniversaries, In Memoriam) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 4DL, telephoned to 071-

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

202 2072 (74-hour answering machine 071-297 2071) or faxed to 071-297 2070, and are charged at £6.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER: Gazette announcements (notices, funerals, marriages, memorials) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 4DL, telephoned to 071-

Birthdays

Sir Ralph Carr-Ellison, Lord-Lieutenant of Tyne and Wear, 72; Sir Julian Critchley, former MP, 67; Professor Sir Roger Elliott, physicist, 69; Richard Fleischer, film director, 81; Mr Lucian Freud, painter, 75; Mr James Galloway, 58; Sir de Villiers Graaff, former leader, South African United Party, 84; Mrs Pauline Green, MBE, 49; Mr Ian Greig, cricketer, 42; Mr Geoff Hurst, footballer, 56; Mr Stephen Jeffries, cricketer, 40; Sir Peter Levene, former chairman, Canary Wharf, 56; Miss Jenny Linden, actress, 57; Mr

Terry McDermott, footballer, 46; Sir Jonathan Parker, High Court judge, 60; Lord Prys-Davies, solicitor and politician, 74; Sir Stephen Richards, High Court judge, 47; Sir Bernard Rix, High Court judge, 53; Mr Paul Rutherford, singer, 38; Mr Maximilian Schell, actor, 67; Dr Sir Alan Stewart, former Vice-Chancellor, Massey University, 80; Mr Michael Unger, Editor, *Manchester Evening News*, 54; Mr David Viner, chief executive and chairman, Lazard Brothers, 47; Sir William Wood, former Second Crown Estate Commissioner, 81.

ROYAL ENGAGEMENTS

The Queen holds an Investiture at Buckingham Palace. The Duke of Edinburgh, Sir David, attends a meeting of the trustees at the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London SE10, as a Fellow of the Royal Society, chairs a meeting of the Privy Council, Board of Patrons at Buckingham Palace, and the Patron and Trustee, holds a dinner for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Charter for Business at Buckingham Palace. Princess Alexandra, President of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund, attends a card concert held by the Scottish Events Committee of the Fund in Glasgow Cathedral, and visits Lambhill Court, Kilmory Park, Glasgow.

Changing of the Guard
The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

CASE SUMMARIES: 8 DECEMBER 1997

The following notes of a judgment were prepared by the reporters of the *All England Law Reports*.

Inheritance tax

Frankland v IRC, CA (Peter Gibson, Thorpe, Chadwick LJ) 7 Nov 1997

Section 144 of the Inheritance Tax Act 1984 provided that property transferred out of a discretionary trust to a beneficiary within two years of the death of the testator should be regarded as taking effect under the will from the date of

death, but the section did not apply if the transfer was made in the first quarter after the death. Christopher McColl QC, *Dirk Jackson (Wansboroughs Willey Hangrove) for the taxpayer; Michael Parness (Inland Revenue Solicitor) for the Commissioners.*

Compass to serve up Christmas cheer for investors as profits surge



CATHY NEWMAN

With around 15 shopping days until Christmas, the flow of company results from blue chips seems to be dwindling. This week, there are precious few figures from Footsie stocks, but a handful of second liners will no doubt keep investors - and the market - busy.

Compass Group, the world's largest contract caterer, is one of the high-points in the week. The food services company reports full-year figures tomorrow, expected to be around the £137m mark, up from £114.3m last year. Analysts are anticipating an impressive 17 per cent growth in earnings per share. But questions over future growth are certain. The company spent £227m on SHRM, the fourth-biggest contract caterer in France, back in June, so the real test now is whether Compass can reward its shareholders without similar acquisitions

over the next couple of years. Shares in Compass have lagged the rest of the market in recent months, although an analysts' trip to the States in October began to revive them. Hot on the heels of Compass comes another leisure operator, Airtours. The travel operator unveils its full-year figures on Wednesday. Analysts are looking for pre-tax profits of £110m to £120m, against £86.8m last time round.

Despite excellent trading during the summer, which will have boosted UK tour operating profits, Airtours could find itself flying into turbulence in the coming months. The big uncertainty is the outcome of a Monopolies and Mergers Commission report into anti-competitive behaviour by travel companies. Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, is to pronounce in the first quarter of

next year, and given the reputation she has acquired since Labour came to power, and her nickname of "Mrs Block-it", tour operators can't afford to be too complacent. That said, given the low cost of holidays offered by the likes of Airtours, Mrs Beckett is unlikely to believe consumers are getting a raw deal. Instead, she will probably recommend the distinction between tour operators and travel agents is clarified, a move which is not expected to hit profitability.

The other point of interest is when, or if, Carnival Corporation, the US cruise operator, will bid. Carnival owns a 30 per cent stake in Airtours, and speculation about its intentions has boosted Airtours' share-price in recent times. Christmas spirits are flowing once again this week, with a number of the smaller brewers reporting figures. Marston,

Thompson & Evershed is first off the block, releasing its figures today in the region of £16m, compared with £14.7m last year. Market uncertainties about the acquisition of the Pitcher & Piano chain continue to haunt the group, which has underperformed the market by 5 per cent over the last six months. Marston experts predict the roll-out of the up-

market bars will have fallen behind schedule. Full-year figures from Vaux Group are out tomorrow. Pre-tax profits range between £37m and £39m, up from £34.9m last year. The Swallow hotels division is expected to steal the limelight once again, with profits likely to have risen 17 per cent.

Analysts are braced for a disappointing performance from tenanted pubs, but will take solace from a strong contribution at the managed outlets. A profits warning recently from Greenall's, which pointed to muted beer sales over the summer, will also overshadow Vaux. News of a succession strategy once Sir Paul Nicholson retires as chairman would cheer investors.

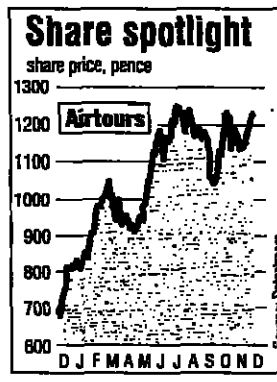
Alders, one of the few retailers reporting this week, is gearing up for full-year profits of around £19 to £22m, against

£11m last year. A strong second half, boosted by windfall spending, will help the department stores operator. However, analysts suspect that the "Diana effect" and the weather may have made September more difficult, while tentative evidence of a slowdown in spending from building society windfall gains may also throw up problems.

There is also likely to be an update on how Alders intends to improve performance at some of its new stores. The group snapped up seven Maples stores in September. More important, though, will be news of Alders' future expansion plans. Those in the know are speculating that Alders will set up a flagship store in central London. It already operates department stores in Croydon, the South-East and the Midlands.

Kingfisher releases its third-quarter trading statement this week. Kingfisher aficionados are looking out for a reasonably upbeat performance from the DIY subsidiary, B&Q, and steady progress at Superdrug and Comet. Figures from Kingfisher's Woolworths chain will be scrutinised for any indication of how Christmas sales are doing. But there is likely to be bad news from Darty, the French electrical retailer wholly owned by Kingfisher.

Among others reporting towards the end of this week is Shield Diagnostics, the biotechnology company. It is rumoured that Shield may use its interim results presentation on Thursday to announce a commercialisation deal for its test for heart disease. LucasVarity is likely to turn in profits for the three months to the end of October of around £85.6m.



Share spotlight
share price, pence

Airtours

Source: Bloomberg

Stock	Price	Weekly	Index	Stock	Price	Weekly	Index
Accor	10.00	+0.00	100	Accor	10.00	+0.00	100
Accor	10.00	+0.00	100	Accor	10.00	+0.00	100
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Under investment pays dividends for RECs as customers lose out

Regional power companies have failed to spend more than £450m on investment over the past two years alone, despite receiving the money from customer bills.

Chris Godsmark, Business Correspondent, reports on figures which show the companies' shareholders, many of which are US power groups, are benefiting at the expense of consumers.

The documents, lodged recently with the electricity watchdog, reveal a huge discrepancy between the investment targets set by the industry regulator, on which customer bills were based, and the cash spent in practice by the 12 regional electricity companies (RECs). The targets were outlined by Offer in its final price cap for the RECs' distribution businesses, which account for about a quarter of household electricity bills.

The RECs have to lodge their capital spending figures each year with Offer, along with forecasts of investment for the full five-years of the price control. Since the wave of REC takeovers saw 11 of the 12 businesses disappear from the stock market, these documents are one of the only clues to their performance under their new owners.

According to the reports, the companies have spent £1.99bn over the first two years of the price cap, to the end of March 1997. Yet Offer's five-year target implies they should have spent £2.45bn, a shortfall of more than 18 per cent.

Over the five-year price formula the companies now predict they will spend £5.5bn, a figure which is 10 per cent below the £6.1bn set by Offer. In both cases the companies receive cash from consumers to fund their full investment target and have used the shortfall to generate bigger profits and more generous dividends for their owners.

Yvonne Constance, head of the Chairman's Group of Electricity Consumers' Committees said customers were paying for

service improvements which the companies have not carried out. "The regulator shouldn't be letting them get away with this. This money is going to their shareholders. If they don't spend the money, it turns into extra profit."

The worst offender, according to the documents, is Seeboard, one of the seven US-owned RECs. Offer's 1995 statement said the company should spend £492m over the five-year price control, but Seeboard now forecasts it will only need to invest £387m, a drop of 21 per cent.

Worse still, Seeboard's investment so far, at £109m, is 45 per cent below the £197m implied in the Offer formula. Seeboard last night disputed the methodology used in this calculation, which divides the five-year target into equal annual instalments. However, this arithmetic is used by other RECs, including Southern Electric, the only re-

CAPITAL SPENDING BY RECS

Offer projection for 1995 to 1997:	£2,449
Company spending, 1995 to 1997:	£1,996
Underspent over two years:	£453m
Offer five-year plan, 1995 to 2000:	£5,100m
Company forecasts:	£5,514

maining independent business and one of the few so far to invest up to its full £142m a year target.

John Weight, Seeboard's managing director of distribution: "This isn't money Offer said we had to spend. We spend money wisely and are always looking for ways to improve efficiencies."

Asked why consumers had not been given money back from the productivity improvements, as in the water industry, he continued: "That's what incentive regulation is all about. Offer will take that into account into the next price formula from 2000, so taking this too literally is dangerous."

Midlands Electricity, also US-owned, is another big offender according to the documents. The company has told Offer it will

spend £389m over the five years, a reduction of 22 per cent on the £500m in the price formula.

A spokeswoman for Midlands said the company had identified extra savings in several big projects since submitting its evidence to Offer. "We have told the regulator about this. There are number of projects we've deferred because of new technical developments such as switch gear and we can get the best value."

The figures are likely to increase fears that US groups have used the RECs as short-term "cash cows", in anticipation of a much tighter price formula from the millennium.

Other US-owned RECs spending less than the targets include Northern Electric, which expects to invest 18 per cent less than in the price formula. At East Midlands Electricity investment so far is 25 per cent down on the target. The company has told Offer it will spend 13 per cent less over the five years. London Electricity has also told Offer it will undershoot its five-year target by 13 per cent.

The under investment is expected to put pressure on Professor Stephen Littlechild as he begins work on the next price formula. Ian Byatt, the water regulator, this year asked several companies not to raise bills by as much as allowed in their price caps after concerns about low investment spending.

The Department of Trade and Industry is understood to be investigating the issue of dividends paid out by RECs, as ministers mull over the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission into the takeover bid for The Energy Group, owner of Eastern Electricity, by PacificCorp of the US. The Government is expected to clear the deal, but only with new conditions to prevent PacificCorp from milking excessive dividends from the regulated utility business.

The investment report lodged by Eastern could fuel the Government's concern. The company, which was bought by Hanson and then spun off into a separately quoted energy business, told Offer it would spend £138m less over the five years than the £347m implied by the price formula, a 16 per cent shortfall. Over the last two years the underspend has been £117m, a shortfall of more than a third.



Accountants hatch plans for emu adoption

Price Waterhouse, the accounting giant, has adopted London Zoo's lone emu in a move it claims will encourage clients to focus attentions on the single currency.

Mark Austen, Price Waterhouse's senior partner (pictured above), said it was ironic that the bird had remained unadopted at the Zoo at the same time as many British

companies remained in a state of "EMU-denial".

Price Waterhouse will pay for the bird's board and lodging, thought to cost from £1,500 a year, though the emu will remain nameless. According to the Zoo emus are difficult to sex. "We are rather hoping this one will lay an egg and settle the matter," said Fred Smith, the keeper.

Tesco signs on to New Deal

Tesco, the UK's biggest selling supermarket chain, will today lay out plans to create 1,500 new jobs for the long-term unemployed under the Government's welfare to work programme. But many of the jobs will be lower paid and part time.

Tesco's plans will give the £4bn welfare to work programme, funded by the windfall tax on the privatised utility companies, its biggest boost since the scheme was launched in July's Budget. The TUC will welcome the package today as it launches a conference on the so-called New Deal programme.

Tesco will begin recruiting unemployed from next month in a pilot scheme at its head office and at 16 stores in Sevenoaks and Harlow and on Tayside. The group said it was aiming to have taken on all 1,500 of the new workers by the end of next year.

Under the scheme people unemployed for more than six months get a guaranteed job for at least six months. Tesco said some of its recruits would be taken on from Government training schemes and would not be subsidised, though others would receive the £60-a-week incentive paid for out of the windfall-tax fund.

One criticism of the scheme has been that the jobs would merely displace others which would have been created anyway by expanding companies. Last year Tesco created almost 7,000 jobs and expanded its total workforce by 15,000, to 160,000.

Michael Wemms, Tesco's retail director and a member of the Government's taskforce, said this was "the wrong way to look at" the announcement. "We are creating job opportunities for people who wouldn't normally get them."

— Chris Godsmark

Government U-turn deals blow to British Telecom

British Telecom is expected to face more intense competition after a Government U-turn in Brussels which will see the UK ditch its system of phone competition from 2000. The Department of Trade and Industry last week dropped objections to an EU directive which will force Britain to adopt equal access for phone networks. It means customers will be able to select a nominated carrier of choice for all long-distance calls, a move which in the US saw a rapid erosion of incumbent AT&T's domestic monopoly. The present system enables customers to use rival long-distance networks to BT's, but only if they dial a three-number access code before each call.

US boost for Phytopharm

Phytopharm, the company which is trying to turn ancient herbal remedies into prescription drugs, will today announce it has been allowed by the United States to start human clinical trials on a controversial treatment for eczema. The approval for Zemyaphy, which is based on 10 Chinese herbs, marks a significant development in drug research. It is the first time the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which regulates all prescription drugs sold in the USA, has recognised that natural plant products where the mode of action is unknown may have real therapeutic properties. The FDA's decision to grant Zemyaphy an IND (investigational new drug) application which allows human trials to begin, is also crucial to Phytopharm's prospects. Its shares, floated at 175p and now 45p, halved in value from almost 300p in February.

Care First posts its defence

Care First could welcome a raised takeover bid from Bupa, the rest home company said in its defence document posted to shareholders at the weekend. But it continues to recommend rejection of last month's Bupa offer of 150p a share in cash which values the company at £341m. It says the healthcare industry is in the early stages of a recovery and shares in Care First are undervalued. Between January and November occupancy rates have risen from 82.5 per cent to 86.9 per cent of the group's portfolio of 12,480 beds in 135 separate homes.

DIY market recovers

The surge in house prices and the increase in consumer confidence has fuelled a recovery in the UK Do-It-Yourself market, according to new research by Mintel, the market research group. It says the DIY market has grown by 10 per cent in real terms in the last five years and is now worth £7.43bn. But while the market has been growing it has also been consolidating around the larger operators such as B&Q and Sainsbury's Homebase, with a 14 per cent decline in the number of outlets. Mintel says independent hardware stores have borne the brunt of the decline with their numbers falling by 22 per cent.

Xmas spirits rise in offices

Companies are spending more on office Christmas parties this year, according to the Institute of Management. It said 54 per cent of businesses would be paying towards the celebrations, a 3 per cent rise on last year. Nearly a third of organisations will foot the entire bill. But while 41 per cent of firms pay bonuses, only 17 per cent do so at Christmas.

City jobs on the line as Swiss banking giants announce £35bn merger

Up to 2,000 highly paid City workers could lose their jobs after two Swiss banking giants, UBS and SBC, confirm plans today to merge operations in a deal worth £35bn. As Clifford German reports, the move comes as dealers and analysts in London wait for bonuses worth some £1bn.

According to analysts up to 10,000 jobs are at risk in Switzerland, with as many as 2,000 set to go in London, after Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS) and Swiss Bank Corporation (SBC) announce a full-blown merger before the Swiss stock exchanges open this morning.

The two Swiss giants have combined assets of 800bn Swiss francs (£330bn), market capitalisation of SFr83bn and 57,000 employees, including 6,000 in London.

Today's announcement will confirm the merger, subject to the approval of the banking regulators in Switzerland, which could take months to secure. It is not

expected to go into details over closures, job losses or disposals, though City experts yesterday predicted a huge shake-out of their combined London workforces to cut costs.

Job losses and insecurity have become a common feature of City mergers, despite the financial community's reputation for huge salaries. SBC's deal to buy SG Warburg resulted in around 1,000 job cuts.

The rationale behind such deals has been the substantial overlap between the investment banking businesses of SBC Warburg and UBS in London. Both are big players in international equities and corporate finance.

This deal comes at the start of the City bonus season, with payouts expected to rise for some key workers by as much as 30 per cent. Goldman Sachs, the US investment bank, is expected soon to pay more than 100 partners in its London operation bonuses of at least £1m each.

The merger is a response to increasing competition in retail and private banking in Switzerland, which is perhaps the most over-banked country in the world. Until this year UBS was the biggest of the three big

Swiss banks ahead of Credit Suisse, with a market capitalisation of £20bn and 28,500 employees.

Early last year it rejected an approach from Credit Suisse, which has since taken over Winterthur, the Swiss insurance company, to become the biggest single Swiss banking company. The UBS board has been under sustained pressure to improve its performance from shareholders.

Its London-based investment management has also been criticised by trustees of pension funds. One of its leading fund managers, Tony Dye, made his much publicised move nearly two years ago to put more investment fund money into cash, in anticipation of heavy falls in US, UK and European stock markets which did not materialise.

SBC is the smaller of the two banks with a market capitalisation of around £15bn and 26,500 employees, including around 3,000 in London. However, its 46-year-old chief executive, Marcel Ospel, is the driving force behind the merger, and was behind the successful acquisitions of SG Warburg in London and Dillon Read in New York.

Hi-tech firms lobby for tax breaks on R&D

Bank of England officials and hi-tech research companies are holding confidential talks which could lead to significant tax breaks for some of the UK's fastest growing businesses.

Sameena Ahmad examines a set of potentially controversial proposals.

The UK's high technology industry is lobbying the Treasury to introduce a new system of tax credits to help finance its research and development. A working group, set up last month by the Treasury and Department of Trade and Industry to examine practical ways to improve the UK's record of investment in research and development, met for the first time last Thursday.

The 15-strong group is

chaired by Dr Keith McCullagh, chief executive of British Biotech, the sector's leading company, and includes representatives from the Bank of England, the Confederation of British Industry and leading institutional investors. According to sources close to the confidential meeting, the group will present a report to Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster-General, in January, proposing tax breaks for biotechnology and IT companies.

Under the proposals, R&D spending would trigger a cash injection from the Inland Revenue into the profit and loss account as a tax credit. While details are still being thrashed out, companies would get a proportion of what they invest in research paid back as tax.

The scheme would allow loss-making companies to bring forward the tax credits that they build up, but cannot utilise under the current rules until they make profits.

One source close to the talks and from the biotech sector said: "The timing of when we get money can be the difference between success and failure. The question is surviving until the research pays off. It is of little use to building up huge tax losses which we can only enjoy if we make it to profit."

Ian Smith, pharmaceuticals analyst at Lehman Brothers pointed out the advantages to the Government: "Companies could do more research, employ more people and make discoveries more quickly. The Government gets taxes faster and creates an industry that can compete better worldwide."

However, the scheme would have a substantial start-up cost. Last year the UK biotech industry spent almost £300m on R&D. The difficulty will be persuading the Government to back a potentially costly scheme which could be criticised as a subsidy to an industry often viewed suspiciously by the public.

Airbus to launch stretched jet

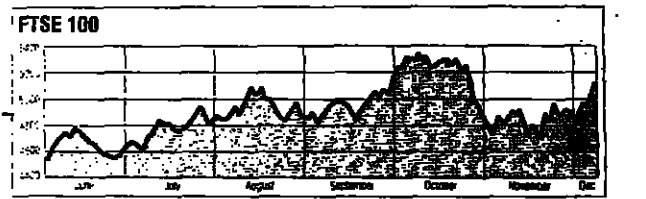
Airbus Industrie is set to announce the launch of a \$2bn programme to develop a stretched version of its A340 jet, possibly as early as today. The 375-seat aircraft will compete head on with some versions of the Boeing 747 jumbo jet and will enter service shortly after 2000.

A meeting of the Airbus supervisory board in Toulouse last Friday is understood to have agreed to proceed with the new aircraft, the A340-300/300X series, even though uncertainties remain over how British Aerospace will fund its share of the programme.

BAC, which holds a 20 per cent stake in Airbus, has applied for £120m in launch aid from the Government for the new jet but has so far been refused. Airbus has already received more than 100 orders and commitments for the A340-300/300X.

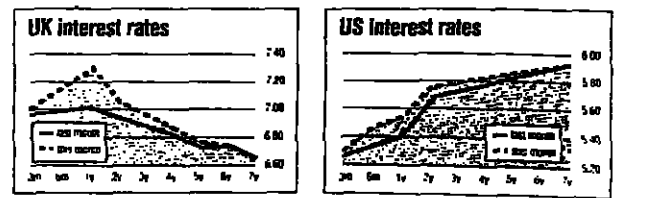
— Michael Harrison

STOCK MARKETS



Index	Close	Wk's chg	Wk's chg %	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield %
FTSE 100	5142.90	311.10	6.44	5367.3	3882.7	3.42
FTSE 250	4751.30	94.60	2.03	4963.6	4321.8	3.35
FTSE 350	2469.00	130.20	5.57	2570.5	1936.7	3.23
FTSE All Share	2409.33	120.69	5.27	2507.56	1942.23	3.23
FTSE SmallCap	2296.5	24.40	1.07	2407.4	2127.5	3.41
FTSE Floating	1248.5	6.40	0.58	1346.5	1196.7	3.36
FTSE AIM	975.9	8.40	0.87	1138	865.9	1.01
Dow Jones	8149.13	354.35	4.55	8299.03	6236.05	1.675
Nikkei	16424.48	271.78	1.27	21001.9	14968.13	0.94
Hang Seng	11527.60	1000.68	9.51	16820.31	8775.88	3.881
Dax	4170.08	220.94	5.60	4458.89	2760.76	1.763

INTEREST RATES

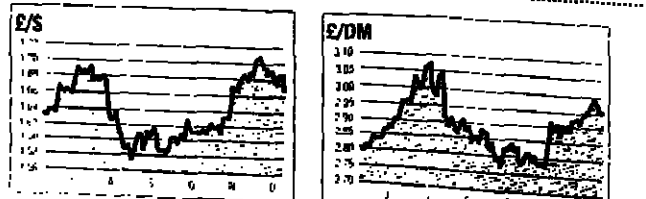


Index	3 month	1 yr chg	1 year	1 yr chg	10 year	10 year chg	Long bond	1 yr chg
UK	7.75	1.34	7.91	0.97	6.53	-1.01	6.46	-1.19
US	5.91	0.41	6.00	0.20	5.90	-0.33	6.07	-0.44
Japan	0.71	0.23	0.71	0.12	1.82	-0.70	2.43	-0.73
Germany	3.76	0.92	4.09	0.81	5.42	-0.34	5.98	-0.78

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price chg	Wk's chg	Falls	Price chg	Wk's chg	% chg
General Acc	168.5	52	17.34	Pharmacia PLC	116	-1.5
Siemens PLC	122	21	15.32	Bellway PLC	146	-0.4
Standard Char	643	8	15.29	Courts PLC	295	-17.5
Smithline Beac	160	19	15.27	M & G Group	446	-0.44

CURRENCIES



Pound	Price	Wk's chg	Yr Ago	Dollar	Price	Wk's chg	Yr Ago
Dollar	1.6577	-3.05c	1.6455	Sterling	0.6032	+1.08p	0.6077
D-Mark	2.9582	-1.95p	2.5484	D-Mark	1.7819	+1.62p	1.5515
Yen	215.78	-10.16	183.51	Yen	1.3012	+12.35	112.24
S index	104.30	-0.70	91.80	S index	108.40	1.10	98.00

OTHER INDICATORS

Index	Close	Wk's chg	Yr Ago	Index	Close	Wk's chg	Yr Ago
Brent Oil (\$)	17.99	-0.38	24.65	GDP	113.90	3.90	109.7
Gold (\$)	288.35	-8.95	371.85	RPI	159.50	3.7	153.81
Silver (\$)	5.31	0.01	4.75	Base Rates	7.25	6.00	

source: Bloomberg

20/DISCOVERIES

Flower evidence links Turin Shroud to the Holy Land

The Turin Shroud, which devotees believe was wound around the crucified body of Jesus two millennia ago, began its travels in Jerusalem, according to a new study.

Eric Silver follows the latest twist on the detective trail.

Avinoam Danin's investigation of photo images and pollen grains taken from the ancient, discoloured linen pinpoints the holy city and the Judean wilderness to its east as the place where wild flowers garlanding the shadowy head of Christ were picked.

"This assemblage of plants

tament account of the execution of Jesus. There are even signs of head wounds that could have been inflicted by a crown of thorns.

Pollen grains and traces of plants, especially around the head, were discovered by Max Frei, a Swiss forensic scientist, who examined the shroud in 1973 and 1978. He identified 25 species among the hundreds of pollen grains he had taken from the linen, but died in 1982 before completing his research.

Three years later, Alan Whanger, a retired American doctor and photography buff, identified 28 species native to the Holy Land after enhancing faint images on a 1931 photograph of the shroud. They included rock roses, crown chrysanthemums and a bouquet of bean capers. Dr Whanger called in Professor Danin, an expert on the botany of the Near East, and they cross-checked their information.

Writing in the latest issue of the Israeli geographical magazine, *Eretz*, Professor Danin reported that a bouquet of rock roses seen in the enhanced photographs on the right cheek of the human figure coincided with pollen found by Max Frei long before anyone had discovered images of the plant on the shroud.

Using a database of plant distribution, the Israeli scholar located 27 of the shroud's 28 species in the Jerusalem area. But the modest bean caper (*gyrophylum dumosum*), noted by both Mr Frei and Dr Whanger, was the clincher.

The bean caper grows only in Israel, Jordan and the Sinai desert. Professor Danin can even tell when it was picked. "The fact that the images of winter leaves appear on the shroud together with the previous year's petioles [a stalk joining leaf to stem] indicates that the plant was picked in spring," he wrote.

In conversation, the professor goes further. "Another kind of caper found on the shroud," he said, "was picked at about 2pm in the Judean wilderness. In spring this caper starts to open at 12 noon and continues growing until 5pm. If you cut it, it stays frozen in the same form."

QED. But what the Danin study cannot do is date the shroud. Carbon testing of the linen in 1988 suggested that it was made in the 13th or 14th century, but this is challenged by the Archbishop of Turin and other shroud advocates, who argue that the chemistry might have been changed by an earlier fire in 1532, or that the specimens examined were parts of a repair job. The debate continues.



Old friends: England and Italy, painted in 1859 by the Pre-Raphaelite artist Jane Benham Hay, and removed from public view for political reasons

Uncovered: a fine Victorian painting by a woman (why weren't there more of them?)

A chance inquiry has led to the rediscovery of a major work of art which was last exhibited at the Royal Academy almost 150 years ago. Esther Leach reports.

his arm around his companion in friendship.

Dr Marsh said the work is of historical importance to the history of women and painting: it had disappeared from public view many years ago. "It was politically controversial at the time because of its subject. Just at that moment Italy had been unified and become independent of Austria. The painting reflects support among the English for Italy," said Dr Marsh. "The painting shows some signs of ageing but it's otherwise in excellent condition. The find is very exciting. We imagine the painting has been in private ownership all this time and we hope more of her work will emerge."

The sought-after early Pre-Raphaelite painting, *England and Italy*, by Jane Benham Hay, is on show for the first time since 1859 at Manchester City Art Gallery.

The painting was uncovered after a request for information about the artist was made to Dr Jan Marsh, an expert in Pre-Raphaelite women artists, from a Boston art dealer.

The dealer had been offered the painting for sale by the Boston owners and was seeking more information. The couple, who had been unaware of its importance, have loaned it to Manchester for an exhibition on Pre-Raphaelite women artists.

The painting shows two young boys against a Mediterranean background: one an Italian street urchin and the other a well-dressed English boy,

the Woman Question and women were beginning to surge ahead in many different fields." Dr Marsh said there was more to learn about Benham Hay, said to have been an independent and emancipated woman. "... we know she was born in 1829, daughter of an ironmonger ... but we don't know when she died, although we believe it was abroad."

"She left her husband William Hay, said to have been a rather middle-of-the-road artist, and their child, to run away to Italy where she lived with an artist called Francesco Altamura and had more children. But really much of this is guesswork."

The exhibition at Manchester exhibits the work of 21 artists, and was brought together by Dr Marsh and a leading expert in Victorian women artists, Pamela Gerrish Nunn.

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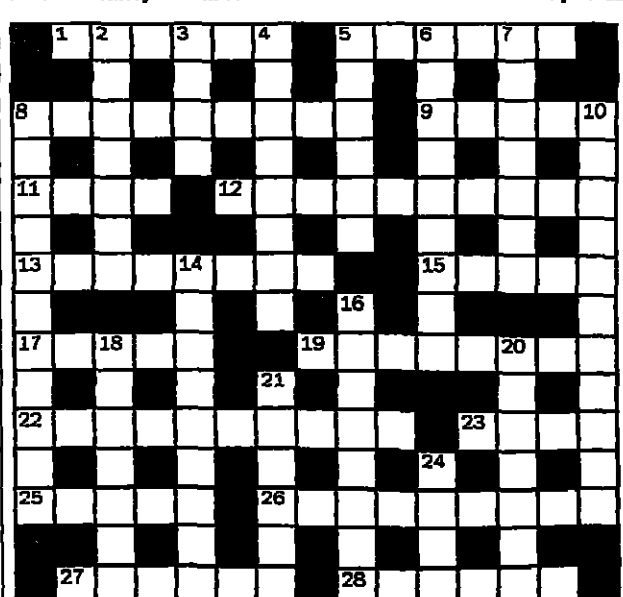


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THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3476, Monday 8 December

By Portia



- ACROSS
- Grumble about money total (6)
 - Was sorry to involve German force who have it rough (6)
 - Politicians may fight for a seat on it (9)
 - None takes on player who's outstanding (5)
 - Token gesture (4)
 - Rises up to join stoppage (10)
 - European nations negotiated with one from abroad (8)
 - Drive American from meeting place (5)
 - Sounds like deer in Southern England (5)
 - Frightening number with it are in want (8)
 - Causing our organisation to appear ill-mannered (10)
 - Colour in outline crudely (4)

- Engaged in murder before midnight (5)
- Natural to feel for gullible money-lender (4,5)
- Prize illustrator is retiring (6)
- It may be a first for student measure (6)
- DOWN
- Isn't down loaded so gets stressed (7)
- Reported it's rung out loud (4)
- Answer is for existing cask to be stored inside (8)
- Let out about Pole bearing grudge (6)
- Explain away the extra paint (5,4)
- Issue new diet I proceed to follow (7)
- A bush doesn't worry hunting dog (6,5)
- Golden age for upper-class teenagers? (6,5)
- Fond remembrance of love in a lasting form (9)
- Run into defendant who's detestable (8)
- Paper written on period music (7)
- Contain home hint that's out of date (7)
- Information needed in order to get car part (3,3)
- Hang around the Northern speculator (4)

